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THE VICAR'S PEOPLE:

A Story of a Stain.

BY

GEO. MANVILLE FENN,

AUTHOR OF "THE PARSON O' DUMFORD."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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THE VICAR'S PEOPLE.



CHAPTER I.

AWAKENING TO THE WORST.

GEOFFREY TRETHICK, as the servants had said, rose from the place where he was lying, and stood trying to think; but his brain seemed out of gear; and all he could master was the idea that he was not in a fit state to be at An Morlock. Consequently he groped his way out, staggered along the drive, and began to make for the hotel in a vague, erratic fashion, greatly to the amusement of such people as he met.

Fortunately for him about the sixth person

he encountered was Amos Pengelly, who limped up, looking at him with a curious expression of disgust upon his countenance.

“‘Wine is a mocker,’” he muttered; “‘strong drink is raging.’ He’s been trying to forget it all.”

The stout miner hesitated for a moment, and then took and drew Geoffrey’s arm through his own, supporting his uncertain steps, and leading him straight to the hotel, where they were refused entrance.

“No,” said Mrs. Polwinno, the landlady; “Mr. Trethick had better take his favours somewhere else;” and Mr. Polwinno, her little plump, mild husband, nodded his head, and said, “Exactly so, my dear.”

Amos Pengelly frowned, and the disgust he felt grew so strong that he was ready to loosen his hold upon Geoffrey, and leave him to his fate.

“He is false,” he said to himself, “and

bad, and now he has taken to the gashly drink, and I've done with him."

But as he spoke he looked in Geoffrey's flushed face and wild, staring eyes, and something of his old feeling of respect and veneration for his leader came back, and with it a disposition to find some scriptural quotation to suit his case.

" ' A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, ' " he muttered. " Yes, he's fell among thieves, who've robbed him of his reason, and I can't leave him now."

Taking hold of the helpless man a little more tightly, and knitting his brows, Amos Pengelly, in complete forgetfulness now of his scriptural quotation, proceeded unconsciously to act the part of the Good Samaritan, but under far more trying circumstances.

He had not gone far before he met Tom Jennen, slouching along with his hands deep down in the pockets of a pair of coarse,

flannel trousers, which came well under the arm-pits, and covered his chest, and the sight of those he met made Tom Jennen grin most portentously.

"Why, Amos," he said, "they told me the gashly old mine was drowned, when it was engineer and head miner. Why, Amos, I thought you'd took the pledge."

Pengelly tightened his lips and went on without answering, finding no little difficulty in keeping his companion upright.

"Ah," said old Mrs. Trevoil, standing knitting a Jersey at her door, and smiling maliciously, "some folk gets up and preaches o' Sundays among the Methodies, and teaches what other folk should do, and can't keep theirselves straight."

"Yes," said a sister gossip, in a loud voice, "that's a nice companion for a preacher. Shame on you, Amos Pengelly! You ought to be took off the plan."

Pengelly's face grew tighter, and he strode

manfully on without deigning to say a word, or to make a reply, as he ran the gauntlet of the fisherfolk standing at the low granite doors, though the remarks he heard thrown at his own religious leanings, and at Geoffrey's double fall from the path of virtue, stung him as sharply as if he had been passing through a nest of hornets.

"I'd take him 'bout with me to chapel o' Sundays till you've converted him if I was thee, Amos Pengelly," said one sharp-tongued woman at last, as he turned the corner of the steep lane where he lived; and then his own door was reached. He dragged Trethick inside, and passed his hand across his dripping brow before taking the young man, now terribly helpless, upon his back, after the fashion of a sack, and carrying him up the short flight of steps and laying him upon his own bed, where Geoffrey seemed to go off at once into a deep sleep.

For the drug had had a most potent

effect upon him, from the fact that he had partaken of a terribly strong dose in the dregs of the bottle, where it had settled down; the two watchers at the furnace, though they had drunk deeply, neither of them having swallowed one-half so much.

As soon as Pengelly had relieved himself of his load, he sank down in the one chair in his bare bedroom, and sat watching Geoffrey hour after hour, waiting for him to awaken.

“When he’s sober, and in his right mind, I’ll talk to him,” said Pengelly, to himself; and there he sat, hour after hour, comforting himself by singing hymns in a low voice, giving them out first two lines at a time, after announcing number and tune, to an imaginary congregation gathered round; and this he kept up till the afternoon.

Then he went down to the mine, leaving Geoffrey locked in; but, on reaching the cliff, it was only to see so many people hang-

ing about the buildings discussing the accident that he had not the heart to go there and be questioned; so he turned aside, and walked on past the old mine shaft to Gwennas Cove, hoping to find old Prawle outside, for he felt that he could not go to the cottage.

He had his wish, for the old man was there, sitting upon a stone and smoking his pipe.

"Well, Amos," he said, as the miner came up, "so you've flooded the mine, I hear."

"Ay, she's full o' water," said Pengelly, sadly.

"Ah, that's a bad job; but what fools ye must have been."

"Fools, perhaps, not to keep a better look-out; but it's done, Master Prawle, and we must get the water out. How's Bessie?"

"Busy," said the old man, shortly.

Pengelly stood looking down at him for

some few minutes, wanting to speak, but flinching from his task.

"Well," said the old man at last, "what is it? Ye're a strange chap, Amos Pengelly. Ye won't drink nor smoke a pipe, only stand and stare and glower, as if you was too good to mix with the like o' me. Now speak out, or else go."

"I want to know if it's all true, Master Prawle?"

"If what's all true?"

"What I've heard up churchtown."

"How do I know what you've heard up churchtown? I was there this morning, and I heard that Wheal Carnac was flooded. Is that what you mean?"

"No, Master Prawle. I mean—I mean about Mullion's lass. Is she here?"

The old man took his pipe from his mouth, and nodded.

"Did Master Trethick bring her here last night?"

The old man nodded again.

“And is it all true about—about the little one?”

“Ay, it’s all true enough,” said the old man. “But never mind about that. He’ll marry her by-and-by, and it will be all right next time. Look here, Amos, what are you going to do about Wheal Carnac?”

“I don’t know,” said the miner.

“Then get to know,” said old Prawle, eagerly. “Look here, Amos, you’re fond of coming and hanging about, and I know what you mean, of course. So look here, I say, if you want to be friends with me, Amos Pengelly, you’ve got to come and tell me what goes on there, and what you are going to do, my lad, about that mine, d’ye hear?”

“Yes, Master Prawle,” said the miner, heavily. “I must go back now.”

“Yes, you’d better,” the old man said, with a leer. “They don’t want men folk

about here now. My Bessie has turned me out, and I don't seem to belong to the place. I'll walk part of the way back with you, Amos, and talk about the mine;" and, to Pengelly's astonishment, the old man did so, talking eagerly the while about the water, and the best way to clear it off.

"P'r'aps they'll give her up now, Amos," he said, at last. "P'r'aps they won't spend no more over her."

"Very likely," said Pengelly, wearily.

"Then mind this—if you want me to be on your side, Amos, you come over now and then and tell me all."

Pengelly nodded, and they parted, the miner making haste back to his cottage, where he found that Geoffrey had not stirred, neither did he move all that night, while Pengelly dozed beside him in a chair.

It seemed as if he would never wake, and the probabilities are that a man with a less vigorous constitution would never have woken

again, so powerful was the drug thrown with reckless hand into the brandy by the ignorant man.

In fact it was ten o'clock the next morning before Geoffrey started up and gazed wonderingly at Pengelly.

"You've woke up at last, sir," said the miner, with a reproachful look.

"At last? What do you mean? Good heavens! How my head throbs."

"It was a sorry trick to do, Master Trethick, and not a man's part, to go and drown your brain like the pit."

"Look here, Pengelly, my head's all in a whirl. I'm ill. I hardly know what I am saying. How came I here?"

"I carried you here mostly, Master Trethick, sir, after you come away from An Morlock."

"Did I go to An Morlock?"

"Yes, sir, I s'pose so—to say the mine was flooded."

“Yes, of course, the mine was flooded; but did I go to Mr. Penwynn’s?”

“Yes, sir, in a state such as I had never believed I could see you, sir—full of drink.”

“What?”

“I suppose you had been taking it to make you forget the trouble, sir. That drop I gave you at the furnace—”

“Ah, to be sure,” cried Geoffrey, who saw more clearly now—“that brandy.”

“Wouldn’t have hurt a child, sir,” said the miner bitterly.

“But it sent my two men to sleep. What time is it now—three—four?” he cried, gazing at the window.

“It’s ten o’clock, sir, and you’ve been since two yesterday sleeping it off.”

“Then that stuff was drugged,” cried Geoffrey. “Here, Pengelly, may I wash here? I must go up to An Morlock directly.”

There was a knocking on the door below,

and Pengelly descended, while Trethick tried to clear his head by drinking copiously of the cold water, and then bathing his face and head.

“Good heavens! If I went up to An Morlock in such a state what would they think? How unfortunate. Everything goes wrong.”

The cold water did clear his dull brain somewhat, but his lips and throat were parched, and he felt terribly ill. So confused was he still, that for the time he had forgotten all about Madge Mullion, while the proceedings of the previous day seemed to him to be seen ~~th~~rough a mist, and the more he tried, the worse confusion he was in. One thing, however, was certain, and that was that he must go up to An Morlock at once, and see Mr. Penwynn about the mine.

“Humph! here is a comb,” he said. “I’ll straighten a little, and then run up home, and—”

He dropped the comb and caught at the window-sill, where a little glass was standing, for as he mentioned that word home, he felt giddy, and back, like a flash, came the recollection of all that had passed.

He had no home to go to. Rhoda must have heard of that awkward incident, and he had been up to An Morlock while under the influence of a drug.

"Feel giddy, sir?" said a voice. "I'll give you a cup of tea before you go away; but here's Mr. Penwynn's man been with a letter for you."

Geoffrey caught the letter from the bearer's hands, and, with a terrible feeling of dread oppressing him, tore it open, and read it through twice before he fully realized its meaning.

It was very short, but to the point, and Geoffrey seemed to see the stern-looking writer as the words gradually took shape and meaning.

For Mr. Penwynn said, in cold, plain terms, that, after what had taken place, of course Mr. Trethick saw that he could not call at An Morlock again, and that he was commissioned by Miss Penwynn to say that she fully endorsed her father's words. As to the mine, for the present Mr. Trethick must continue his duties there, and in the conduct of their business relations Mr. Penwynn called upon him to use his most strenuous exertions to reduce the loss, and to place the mine in its former state.

"Curse the mine!" cried Geoffrey aloud. "What is that compared to my character there? Pengelly," he cried fiercely, "do people believe this scandal?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And yesterday? What about me? How did I seem?"

"Like one, sir," said the miner sternly,

“who had forgotten that he was a man, and drunk till he was a helpless beast.”

“And I went there like that,” thought Geoffrey. “Perhaps she saw me. And she believes all this.”

He stood there with his head feeling as if a flood had burst in upon his throbbing brain.

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CHAPTER II.

GEOFFREY'S NEW LODGINGS.

GEOFFREY TRETHICK had truly expressed his character when he said that he had Cornish blood in his veins, and could be as obstinate as any in the county. Whether he was descended from the same race as peopled the opposite coast of France it is impossible to say, but he was as stubborn as any Breton ever born.

The days glided on, and he found that he was disbelieved and doubted; that Mr. Penwynn had lost faith in him, and that Rhoda had set herself aloof; and one way and another he was so exasperated that he set his teeth firmly, and swore he

would never say another word in his own defence.

“Let them think what they may, say what they like, I’ll never protest or deny again; and as for Rhoda, fickle, cold-hearted, cruel girl, I hate her with all my heart—and I am a liar for saying so,” he cried. “But that’s all over, and some day or another she shall beg my pardon—and I’ll tell her so.”

Acting on the impulse of the moment he sat down and hastily penned a note to her, without internal address or signature, placed it in his pocket, and kept it there ready for posting when he passed the office. It was very brief.

“I gave you my love in full trust and hope. I believed you gave me yours in return. Trouble came—accident—mishap—and appearances blackened me. You heard much, saw less, and you judged me from hearsay, giving me no opportunity for

defence. In other words, you believed me to be as great a scoundrel as ever walked this earth. I accept your wishes conveyed in your father's note; but some day you will beg my pardon—ask my forgiveness. I shall wait till that day comes."

Not a very gentle letter to send to a lady, but he sent it just at a time, to use his own words, when his soul was raw within him.

He had seen Mr. Penwynn, who ridiculed the idea of the flooding being the work of an enemy, and bade him, imperiously, free the mine from water.

He was too proud to say much, but accepted at once the position of servant, and went his way to examine the mine once more, set the pumping-engine working at its highest pressure, and found at the end of twenty-four hours that he had not sunk the water the eighth of an inch.

Then he had found himself deliberately "cut" by the better-class people in the place,

and that his efforts to obtain even the humblest lodgings were in vain. The hotel people excused themselves on the plea of want of room, and for several nights he slept in the office by the mine.

There was one man, though, who seemed to be hunting Geoffrey about from place to place, but he avoided him in his anger."

"I know what he wants to say to me," he cried, "and, by George! I won't have it. I never did strike any one wearing the cloth, but I'm in that aggravated state of mind just now that if he did speak to me, and begin to preach I should hit him."

It is needless to say that the man he avoided was the vicar.

"Rev Master Lee has been here again, sir," said Amos Pengelly to him one morning, "and I said you'd be here soon, and he's coming again."

"Then I won't see him," cried Geoffrey angrily. "Look here, Pengelly, I'm not

going to be driven out of Carnac. People are sending me to Coventry, and are trying to aggravate me into going, but I shan't go."

"No, sir, I wouldn't go," said Pengelly quietly. "I'd stay here and put the mine right, and then make amends."

Trethick turned upon him fiercely, but Pengelly did not shrink, and the young man uttered an impatient "pish!"

"Look here, Pengelly, I must have lodgings somewhere. What am I to do? I'm not a dog to live in this kennel of an office."

"You can share my place if you like."

"No, no; I told you I would not."

"I was talking to Mrs. Prawle about it last even, sir."

"What! you were over at the Cove?" said Geoffrey eagerly. "How was poor Madge?"

"Very sadly, sir, they say. You haven't been over for some days."

"I? No, of course not," said Geoffrey sharply. "What should I do there?"

"Mrs. Prawle said that if you could not get a better place, they had their little parlour and the one room out of it to spare; and Bessie said she would tend you if you liked."

"But, hang it, man! I couldn't go there," cried Geoffrey.

"I don't see why, sir," said Pengelly simply. "I couldn't go there now, or I'd give up my place to you, but you could."

"Oh, no—impossible!"

"They're wonderfully clean people, sir," continued Pengelly, "and, though the furnishing's humble, they'd make you very comfortable, for old Master Prawle's seldom in the house, and it's little you'd want it for except for your breakfast and to sleep."

"But that poor girl's there," cried Geoffrey.

"I don't see why that should make any

difference, sir," said Pengelly. "I was talking to Bessie about it after Mrs. Prawle had spoken, and I went against it; but she said it would be quite right, and hoped you would go."

"Indeed!" said Geoffrey. "I say, Pengelly, how many times have you been there lately?"

"Every night, sir. It come of my taking a message, and money, and a parcel, from Mistress Mullion up at the cottage; for, though she can't have her child back, because of old Mr. Paul, her heart's very sore about her, and she sends there every day."

"And so you and Miss Bessie have been talking matters over, eh?"

"Yes, sir. I'm a poor fellow to go to a woman's eye, but I'd try very hard to go to her heart," said the miner, simply.

"I did not mean that, Pengelly," said Geoffrey, smiling. "I meant about my matters."

“ Oh yes, sir, a deal ; and if you can't get elsewhere, I'd go there.”

The miner went off about his work, and Geoffrey, began to think over what had been proposed.

“ Oh, no ; it would be madness to go there. It would be giving colour to the report ;” and he dismissed the idea from his mind. But that evening, as he sat at the office-door upon the bleak, wind-swept promontory, with the remnants of a cheerless meal, brought him by one of the miners' wives, upon the desk behind him, and the prospect of a night upon the bench beside the door, with a rolled up coat for a pillow, his thoughts went back to the cottage at Gwennas, and he had to light a pipe to try and soothe himself, so bitter were his feelings.

“ It's too bad—a thousand times too bad for anything,” he cried, as he gazed out to sea at the ever-darkening waves, now be-

ginning to glitter with the reflections from the stars above.

“’Pon my soul, I’m the most unlucky fellow that ever breathed, and it’s miserable living like this. Suppose I go to old Prawle’s? I could sit with him down in his cave, and smoke, and drink smuggled liquor. I’m a drunkard by reputation, so why not indulge?

“I like poor old Mrs. Prawle—and Bessie. Good lass.”

He had a long, quiet think, and then burst out into a cynical laugh.

“What would Carnac say if I went there?”

And directly after, in a hard fit of stubborn opposition,—

“What does Carnac say now? D—— Carnac. I will go, and they may say and think what they will.”

He had worked himself up into such a fit of passion that for fear he should cool down, and let himself back out of what he looked

upon as a bit of revenge upon the scandal-loving place, he started off at once, reached the cliff, and walked swiftly along to the Cove, where, as he came to the rapid descent, he stopped short to gaze at the place below.

On a stone outside the door, which was open, and from which came forth a soft flood of light, sat old Prawle, smoking away, with the bowl of his short black pipe glowing in the twilight like a star, while leaning against the door-post, with something in her arms, was Bessie Prawle, rocking herself to and fro, and singing an old Cornish ditty in a sweet, wild voice.

“By George!” said Geoffrey, softly, “I’d forgotten the bairn.”

He stood there watching that scene and listening to Bessie’s song for some time, and it set him thinking of women and children, and of what strength there is in their weakness to alter the journey of life. Then he thought of the suffering girl inside, lying there

helpless and forsaken in her sorest time of need; and lastly he thought he would go back and try and furnish up the office and make it habitable, but just then a gruff voice hailed him with a rough—

“Hallo!”

“Hallo, Father Prawle!” he cried, and he went down, Bessie retiring into the cottage as he came into sight.

“What’s the news about the mine?” said the old man.

“Bad,” was the reply. “Don’t go away, Miss Bessie. How is your patient?”

“Not well, Mr. Trethick,” she said, coming back and standing before him with the baby in her arms, and gazing firmly and unshrinkingly in his face.

“I’m sorry. Poor lass!” he said. “May I come in?”

Bessie drew back, and he stooped and entered the room, where poor invalid Mrs. Prawle was seated; and half an hour after

the affair was so far decided that he had been referred to old Prawle himself to settle terms.

The old man had descended the rock-hewn steps to his bit of a cavern, from which came up the loud crackling of wood, while a ruddy glow shone out on the darkened rocks.

"Ahoy, there!" shouted Geoffrey.

"Ahoy!" echoed the old man. "Come down."

Geoffrey descended, to find a ruddy fire burning, and a quaint old copper kettle singing in the hottest place.

"I thought you'd come down and have a pipe and a drop o' brandy before you went back, my lad," said the old man, in his grim, gruff away. "Sit down on yon tub. There's some good tobacco there."

"Ah, that looks sociable," said Geoffrey, who was at heart a very gregarious animal. "I want to talk to you about terms."

"What, for the mine?" said the old man, sharply.

"No : for lodgings, if you'll have such a bad character in the house as I."

"Been talking to them?" said the old fellow.

"Yes ; and they are quite willing. Are you?"

"Oh, ay, I'm willing enough," said Prawle, roughly. "I like bad characters," he chuckled. "We're all bad characters here—so they say."

"Then I shall be in the right place," said Geoffrey, cynically. "But come, what shall I pay you?"

"Whatever the old woman thinks right, my lad," said the old man, who, in spite of his grim ways, seemed to glance with favouring eyes at his visitor. "Sattle it with that poor soul up yonder, and pay her the bit of money regular. Let her think—hold that glass upright while I pour in the hot water—now help yourself to the brandy. Never paid duty in its life," he whispered, grinning.

Geoffrey poured in the spirit, and helped himself to the sugar. The old man mixed for himself, tasted, nodded, and went on—

“Let her think, poor soul, that she’s saving and helping to pay for her keep, and it will make her happy. Better than selling sweets.”

“That’s settled then, Father Prawle?”

“Sattled,” said the old man, holding out a great, gnarled hand, and giving Geoffrey’s a tremendous grip. “We don’t want the brass, but it pleases her.”

“And I may come down here and smoke a pipe when I like?”

“Ay, ay, my lad, and welcome,” said old Prawle. “You’ll find the brandy in the locker here, and the key’s always up on that ledge of rock yonder in the niche, and the matches are over t’other side there in that one. There’s always plenty of wreck-wood for a bit of fire, and I keep the breaker there full of fresh water.”

“Good,” said Geoffrey, smiling. “Then I shall come to-morrow, Father Prawle, and the world may say what it likes.”

“That for the world!” cried the old man, contemptuously exhaling a great puff of smoke. “The world’s called me wrecker, smuggler, and thief. The world has called my bonnie lass there witch. Let it. I’m a rough old fellow, Master Trethick, and I’d ha’ knocked you down at one time—I’d ha’ throwed you over the cliff at one time, ’fore I knowed you; but you stood up like a man for my bonnie lass there, and you’ve said a many kind word to my poor creetur up yonder, and there’s my hand.”

He held out the great gnarled fist again, and Geoffrey took it and had his own tightly gripped.

“I don’t care for what people say,” growled the old fellow. “This place is mine, and I could buy a dozen such if I liked. You’re welcome, my lad, as long as you like, and

when you care to go I can give you as good a bit o' fishing as a man could have, and as good a drop of brandy and bit of tobacco. As to Mullion's lass, that's no affair o' mine, and I shan't make it any affair o' mine; but it's as fine a little youngster as I ever see."

Geoffrey's countenance, that had been glowing from the joint effects of the warmth of the fire and old Prawle's hospitable words, grew dark once more; but he sat chatting to the old man for another hour, and then returned to the office by the mine.

The next day Carrac society had another shock right to the centre, and Miss Pavey was outraged in her tenderest feelings by the news which she heard, and which she hastened to take to An Morlock, namely, that that wicked young man had now joined poor lost Madge Mullion at the Cove.

At night old Mr. Paul heard the news as well, as he tottered through the place by the

help of his stick, and he went back home, and smoked the first cheroot he had smoked for days, to tell Mrs Mullion; and the news had somewhat the colour of hope in the poor, sad mother's eyes.

CHAPTER III.

OAK AND WILLOW.

MR. CHYNOWETH was in very good spirits one morning, for he had composed a letter, offering his hand and fortune to Miss Pavey, entirely to his satisfaction. It was written in a large engrossing hand upon superfine brief paper, and had the legal look that a document of so much importance ought to wear.

“I think that will do it,” said Mr. Chynoweth. “Her little income and my little income will make a big income; and with rubbers regularly three times a week, we ought to add something to the common fund.”

So rubbing his hands with satisfaction, he

proceeded to play a quiet game in his desk, which he had just finished as Mr. Penwynn came in, when Mr. Chynoweth referred to his slate, and told him where Geoffrey had gone to lodge.

“It is nothing to me,” said the banker, “so long as he does his work. Anything fresh?”

“No, sir, nothing. He has been here this morning, and said there was little to report. He says all his efforts to relieve the mine are useless; that hardly anything can be done.”

“Tell him when he comes again that he must do something. I must call in fresh help if he is too ignorant to free the mine from water.”

He might have called in the help of half the engineers in England, but they could not have shown him a satisfactory means of battling with the huge rush of water that entered the gap blown out by the wretched

man. For beneath the sea there was always a torrent ready to take the place of any that might be pumped out, and, after endless investigations, Geoffrey Trethick and Pengelly gazed at each other in despair.

It was bitterly tantalizing. Here was the rich tin ore waiting for them in abundance, but no means of reaching and sending it up.

They examined the shore. Went out in boats and sounded. Took into consideration the possibility of throwing in sand bags over the chasm, but on such a coast they would have been tossed aside by the first storm; and the despair at Geoffrey Trethick's heart grew blacker.

They were bitter times too, for Mr. Penwynn. On the strength of the success, John Tregenna had presented himself, made a claim, and been handsomely paid off by the banker, who, wishing to be on good terms with the man he had formerly disappointed and being then in the full flush of triumph,

had paid Tregenna double the amount agreed upon, and now he was too proud to demand it back, though it would have been a useless proceeding if he had.

Large as was the sum he drew, Tregenna had been terribly wroth, but when the news came to him of the flooding of the mine he sat and gloated over his success, and laughed to himself till he began to think of the man Lannoe, his tool, and of the possibility of getting rid of him in some plausible way, so as to be sure of being free from demands for black mail.

Then the days passed with more good news. It was certain, he knew, that Geoffrey had been dismissed from visiting at An Morlock, news that was delightful in its way. Then Lannoe did not come, though he was expecting him day after day, till a strange feeling of hope began to grow into a certainty, and at last he felt sure that the man had lost his life in his nefarious attempt.

Lastly came to him the information that Geoffrey Trethick had gone to lodge with the Prawles; and John Tregenna laughed aloud as he thought once more of Rhoda, and of the time when he could renew his pretensions, and this time, perhaps, with better success.

The days wore on, and finding that nothing could be done in the way of pumping out the mine, Geoffrey and Pengelly spent their time in the top galleries, to which the water had not reached, searching in vain for something in the way of reward.

The former found his bad character seemed to have but little effect upon the poorer people of Carnac, even though Miss Pavey in her visiting said that he was a terrible wretch, and ought to be excommunicated by the church. His worst failing in the eyes of the people was his going to lodge at Prawle's, and unwittingly in this he had done poor Madge an ill turn, for the news reached the cottage

just at a time when old Paul had settled that Mrs. Mullion should fetch her daughter home. When this news came he bade her wait.

So time went on, and from the poorer folk there was always a shake or a nod as Geoffrey passed, and now and then an offering of fish from Tom Jennen or some other rough fellow with whom he had spent a night out in the bay.

He was passing along the road one day, in a very morose humour, when he came full upon the Reverend Edward Lee, and was about to pass him with a short nod, but the vicar stopped.

“How are you?” said Geoffrey, shortly.

“Not well, Trethick,” said the vicar, holding out his hand, to the other’s great surprise.

“Sorry for it,” said Geoffrey, grimly, shaking hands. “What is it—bile?”

The vicar looked at him with a pained expression of countenance.

"No," he said, "I am sick at heart. We don't see one another often, Trethick. May I walk with you?"

"Oh, if you like," said Geoffrey, as the vicar turned and walked by his side. "I was going over the hill yonder by Horton mine, to let the wind blow some of my bad temper out of me."

"I should like to go with you, Trethick," said the vicar, eagerly.

"Look here, Lee," exclaimed Geoffrey, "I'm a man of the world, and rough usage has made me rough. If you want to talk pious platitudes to me by rote, please don't, for we should be sure to quarrel. I am horribly unholy this morning."

"But I do not," exclaimed the vicar, earnestly. "I want to talk to you as a man of the world."

"Come on, then," said Geoffrey; "it's a treat to talk to a civilized being now."

He thrust his arm through that of the

young vicar, and hurried him on and on uphill till the latter was breathless. Then he stopped.

"Now then!" said Geoffrey, "here we are, right out on the top, with heaven above and the free air around; now talk to me like a man of the world."

The vicar followed Geoffrey's example, and threw himself on the short, crisp turf, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, and gazing at his companion with a curiously troubled air.

"Now then," said Geoffrey, "man of the world, make a beginning."

The vicar hesitated, and Geoffrey smiled.

"Well, I'll help you," he said. "You want to know why I have not been at church lately?"

"Yes," said the vicar, eagerly catching at the ball thrown to him, "I did want to speak to you about that for one thing."

"Too wicked!" said Geoffrey. "Mind too much taken up with other things."

“Too much bent upon laying up treasure upon earth, Trethick, thinking too little of the treasure in heaven.”

“I thought you said that you were going to talk to me like a man of the world,” said Geoffrey, sharply.

“Yes, yes—I am,” was the hasty reply, for the vicar saw that a few more words in the same strain would send his companion away.

“Go on then. You said you were heart-sick,” said Geoffrey. “What’s the matter?”

“I am in a great deal of trouble, Trethick,” said the vicar, heavily. “I’m not a man of the world, but you are, and—and—I like you, Trethick, I don’t know why, but I wish we were better friends.”

“You like me?” said Geoffrey, laughing. “Why, my good sir, you and I are like positive and negative poles; we repel one another.”

“But why should we, Trethick? You

seem always to exercise a strange power over me. I did not like you at first."

"No," said Geoffrey. "I was too rough and outspoken; too irreligious. I shocked you."

"Yes, yes. That is true," said the vicar.

"Then you found that I was a rival, and you hated me?"

"No: not hated you," said the vicar, sadly. "I felt that we could never be friends. That was all."

"Look here, Lee," said Trethick; "are you a saint, or a humbug?"

"Certainly not the first," said the vicar, smiling. "I sincerely hope not the second."

"No: I don't believe you are," said Geoffrey, shortly. "Well, sir, the game's up. I've failed in my projects, and I've failed in my love. The way is open. I am no rival now."

"Trethick," said the vicar, earnestly, "can't we be friends?" and he held out his hand.

"Oh, yes, if you like," said Geoffrey, bitterly. "But why should you want to be friends with such a blackguard? There, man, go and have your way. I'm out of the race."

"You are speaking very bitterly, Trethick," said the vicar, sadly. "You are bitterly disappointed with your failures. So am I. It is as Mr. Penwynn said that evening: we have not been able to make our way."

"But you are making your way," said Geoffrey.

"No," replied the vicar, shaking his head, "not at all. I cannot move these people. I try all I can; I have done everything possible, but they prefer to go to that wretched chapel, and to hear such men as Pengelly. Trethick, I speak to you as a man of the world," he continued, growing each moment more earnest, and his face flushing. "I am in despair; that is why I came to you,

whom I know to be disappointed, as I am myself. I cannot get at these people's hearts. I yearn to do good amongst them, but I cannot stir them, while you seem to touch them to the core. If I announced that you would preach to them next week, the place would be thronged; as it is, it is nearly empty. Why is this?"

"Because I am the sinner, you the saint," said Geoffrey, bitterly. "There, don't look shocked, man; it is because you are too clever—too scholarly with them; you put on the priest's garment, and with it the priest's mask, and completely hide your nature. Let them know your profession by your ways, sir, and not by your cassock. I believe you are a good fellow at heart. Your words now prove it; but you have grown so full of belief in form and ceremony that you think them all in all. Why, Lee," he cried, lighting up, "I could get these people to follow me like dogs."

"Yes," said the vicar, sadly; "but they shun me."

"No," said Geoffrey; "I am boasting. But still I believe I could move them. Look here, Lee, you are in earnest over this?"

"Earnest?" cried the other. "I'd give anything to win them to my side."

"Then be more of a man, less of a priest. Don't draw such a line of distinction between you. Mix with them more. Never mind the long cassock and ritualistic hat. Take more interest in their pursuits, and let them feel how much your nature, however polished, is like theirs."

"I will, Trethick. Yes, you are right. I am sure you are right."

"I believe—I hope I am," said Geoffrey.

"I am sure of it," cried the vicar; "and I see now how unsuited much of my teaching has been. But now about yourself, Trethick, let me begin by being more human, and helping you."

"How can you help me?" said Geoffrey, bitterly. "I am a hopeless bankrupt in pocket and morals, so the world says; and I am cut off from all that I looked forward to with happiness. Why don't you be up and doing, man, as I told you?" he cried, with a mocking devil in his eyes; "the way is open—go and win the race."

"I do not understand you," said the vicar, sadly.

"Don't understand? You know you loved Rhoda Penwynn."

"I did love her—very dearly," said the vicar, simply.

"And not now?"

He shook his head.

"Miss Penwynn would never have cared for me," he said quietly; "I soon learned that. These things are a mystery, Trethick. Don't speak of that any more. It hurts me."

Geoffrey nodded.

"Here, sit down," he cried, "I'm tired,

bodily and mentally. I feel as if I want my mother-earth—to nurse me. There,” he cried, settling himself upon the turf with a grim smile, “sometimes, lately, I’ve felt as if I should like her to take me in her cold, clayey arms, to sleep never to wake again.”

“Don’t talk like that, Trethick,” said the vicar, appealingly; “life is too real and good to be carelessly thrown away.”

“Right, Lee; you are right—quite right. Well, then,” he said, “I won’t; but look here, man, you want to win the people to your side—here is your opportunity. That poor girl—Margaret Mullion.”

“Yes,” said the vicar, eagerly. “I wanted to talk to you about her.”

“Go on then.”

“I dared not commence,” he said, “I shrank from beginning; but that was one reason why I longed to talk to you, Trethick.”

"Well," said the other, smiling. "I am all attention."

"I wanted—not to reproach you for your sin, Trethick—"

"That's right," said Geoffrey, smiling bitterly.

"Don't treat it with levity, for heaven's sake, Trethick," cried the vicar. "Think of the poor girl—of her life blasted—of the wrecked fame, and of the expiation that might be made by way of atonement."

"Yes," said Geoffrey, "I have thought of all that."

"But an hour ago I was with the broken-hearted mother, who was sobbing at my feet."

"And she asked you to see me?"

"Yes. Begged me to see you and appeal to you, and I said I would. Mr. Trethick, in our great Master's name, think of all this—think of the poor girl's fall, and try to make amends. No, no, don't interrupt

me till I have done. I tell you I have knelt and prayed, night after night, that your heart might be softened, and that your reckless spirit might be tutored into seeing what was right, and into ceasing from this rebellion against the laws of God and man."

"Laws of God and man, eh?" said Geoffrey, mockingly.

"Yes; is it not written that the adulterer and adulteress shall be stoned?"

"Yes," cried Geoffrey, fiercely; "and is it not written—'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone'? D—— it all, Lee, I'm sick of this. I've been stoned to death ever since this cursed affair got wind. My mistress—the woman I was to marry—casts the first stone at my devoted head; every one follows suit, and I am battered so that I don't know myself."

"You are mocking," cried the vicar.

"I am not mocking," cried Geoffrey; "but I am half mad. And you," he cried, passion-

ately, "even you, who call yourself my friend, are like the rest. But what have you done for this wretched girl, abased and heart-broken in her sin—what have you done?—you and the better-class people? Treated her worse than the beasts that perish. One and all. And this is Christianity! Shame upon you! shame!"

The vicar looked at him appealingly as Geoffrey went on.

"Have you been to her and spoken words of comfort?"

"No," said the vicar, humbly.

"Have you taken her by the hand, and bidden her go and sin no more?"

"No."

"Have you tried to lead her to a better way—helped her, and guided others to help her in her sore distress?"

The vicar shook his head.

"And yet you say, How am I to win the hearts of these people?"

The vicar wiped the perspiration from his brow as Geoffrèy went on.

“Not one soul of all who knew her came to the poor wretch’s help. Cast off by the man who robbed her of her fame, I found her maddened with despair. Rejected by her own people, I found her ready to die. Ready to die? I found her dying, for she had said to herself—‘My people—my love—the whole world turn their backs upon me. What is there for me to do but die?’ What should you say to the man who, finding the poor girl drowning, leaps into the sea, drags her out, and, like some poor beggarly imitation of a Samaritan, takes her to a home, and gives her help and shelter, in defiance of the world? What would you say to such a man as that?” cried Geoffrèy.

“That he was a hero,” cried the vicar.

“You lie,” cried Geoffrèy, leaping up in his excitement. “You lie to my face, for you come and tell me I am a villain; that I

wrecked the poor girl's happiness ; that the world scorns me ; and you bid me, for what I have done, to marry the girl and give her the shelter of my name."

"But Trethick—Geoffrey, did you do this ?"

"Did I do this ? Yes, but—damnation ! there was a devil of pride rose up within me, when, on the top of my reverses with the mine, I found every one turn against me, and my accusers would not let me speak. Even she who should have been the first to take my part, turned from me and made me more bitter still."

"But Trethick," cried the vicar, excitedly, "is this true ?"

"True ?" cried Geoffrey, throwing up his arms towards heaven, as he stood there now with the veins starting in his brow, and the passion working within him bringing him to such a pitch of excitement, that his companion could see his templethrob. "I scarcely

spoke word about it before ; but I swear by the God above us I never felt love, thought love, or dreamed of love but for one woman, and, Heaven help me, she has cast me off."

He turned away and rushed headlong down the hill, but the paroxysm of rage was over, the excitement gone ; and he returned directly to throw himself upon the turf.

"Did you ever see such a madman ?" he cried, bitterly. "There, go on with your lecture ; I'll hear you to the end."

"Trethick," said the vicar, quietly ; and Geoffrey turned slowly towards him, to find that his companion was kneeling there with outstretched hands.

"Well ?" was the harsh response.

"I asked you to let me be your friend. I ask you again, Geoffrey, as I ask you now, to forgive me my doubts."

Geoffrey caught his outstretched hands.

"You believe me ?"

"Believe you ? Yes, every word. Forgive

me for wronging you so cruelly. I'll try and make amends."

"Not by taking my part—not by speaking about this?"

"Why not?"

"As the cloud came so let it go," cried Geoffrey. "The poor girl is silent about her lover, but the truth will come out of itself. Till then I am content to wait, and let the world have its say."

"But he must marry her—poor girl!"

"No!" said Geoffrey, sternly. "No! Better let her bear her lot, hard as it may be. The man who could forsake her in her greatest need would never make her a husband worthy of her love. She must accept her fate."

"But you, Geoffrey Trethick. It is unmanly not to clear your fame."

"Maybe," he said bitterly; "but I don't think I am like other men. I shall wait until Time shall bleach it once more white."

"But why not leave your lodgings?" said the vicar. "Take apartments elsewhere."

"What, make a cowardly retreat?" cried Geoffrey.

"But the world. It was an unfortunate thing for you to do. Why did you go there?"

"Out of defiance," cried Geoffrey.

"But that is past now. Try and make an effort to crush this wretched scandal upon your name. It is a duty, Geoffrey."

"That I will not do," he said, stubbornly.

"And Rhoda?" said the vicar, softly.

Geoffrey started as if stung.

"Let her wait too," he said, angrily. "When she humbles herself and asks my pardon she shall have it, and with it my farewell words. Lee, I loved that woman as strongly as man could love, but that love is dead."

They stood together now in silence for a few moments. Then Geoffrey turned to go.

"I'll drop in on you some day, Lee," he said, in his usual light tone. "Good-bye, old fellow. I think we understand each other now."

"I'll come with you," said the vicar, quietly.

"Come with me, where?"

"To see poor Madge."

And they went together down the hill, oak and willow; but the oak growing gnarled and bowed with a canker in its breast, and the willow growing stronger every hour.

CHAPTER IV.

A THANK-OFFERING.

Six months had passed since the night Geoffrey Trethick saved Madge Mullion's life, and his character and his ways had become, like the failure of Wheal Carnac, matters of the past.

There had been scores of interesting topics since then. People had talked about Miss Pavey's change, and how she followed the vicar like his shadow. There was that affair which had shaken Mr. Penwynn's little local bank, and the forced sales he had had to make to meet his engagements. The carriage had been put down at An Morlock, and there were people who said that no good

would come of the banker's great intimacy with John Tregenna, who was up at the house more frequently than he had been for some time past.

Geoffrey was as much at Coventry with the better-class people of Carnac as ever. Dr. Rumsey nodded coldly when they met; old Mr. Paul looked at him fiercely, and waited; and other people followed suit. There were no pleasant invitations to high tea, with rubbers of whist, and supper after. A man who had settled down as the companion of old Prawle, the wrecker, and made the cottage at Gwennas Cove his home, was not one to be received.

He used to laugh mockingly as he saw it all, and coolly accepted his fate. At the end of three months he had received a curt letter from Mr. Penwynn, enclosing a cheque, and saying that his services were no more needed at Wheal Carnac; but Pengelly was kept on as care-taker of the valuable plant.

Then came rumours from time to time of talk of selling the mine, but no buyer could be found ; and Geoffrey writhed as he thought of the treasures buried there, and of the impossibility of reaching them unless another shaft were sunk, and even then the prospects were so bad that the capital was not likely to be subscribed.

Old Prawle was generally the bearer of this news, and he took a wonderful interest in the place, though in a secretive, curious way ; and after many chats with the old fellow, Geoffrey came to the conclusion that what he knew was of little worth, and the conversation ceased.

Sometimes he thought he would go, but the bitter spirit of obstinacy was in him more strongly than ever, and he stayed on, waiting, he said, for the apology he expected to get. When that came he meant to say good-bye to the place for ever. As it was he very rarely saw Rhoda, and when he did she refused to meet his eye.

One day there was a bit of excitement down on the cliff.

"Here you, Amos Pengelly, what have you got to say to it?" cried Tom Jennen. "You don't carry on none o' them games at chapel. Why don't you set to and have thanksgiving, and turn chapel into green-grocer's shop like up town in Penzaunce?"

Amos shook his head, but said nothing.

"Why," said Tom Jennen, "you never see anything like it, lads. I went up church-town, and see something going on, when there was Penwynn's gardener with a barrowful o' gashly old stuff—carrots, and turnips, and 'tatoes, and apples, and pears, and a basket o' grapes; an' parson, and young Miss Rhoda, and Miss Pavey, all busy there inside turning the church into a reg'lar shop. Why it'll look a wonderful sight to-morrow."

"They calls it harvest thanksgiving," said another fisherman, "and I see pretty nigh a cartload o' flowers, and wheat, and barley

and oats, go in. Won't be no room for the people."

"I thought the church looked very nicely," interposed Amos Pengelly; "and if I wasn't down on the plan to preach to-morrow at St. Milicent, I'd go myself."

"Lor' a marcy, Amos Pengelly, don't talk in that way," said Tom Jennen. "I never go to church, and I never did go, but I never knew old parson carry on such games. Harvest thanksgiving indeed! I never see such a gashly sight in my life. Turnips in a church!"

"Well, but don't you see," said Amos, in an expounding tone of voice, "these here are all offerings for the harvest; and turnips and carrots may be as precious as offerings as your fine fruits, and grapes, and flowers."

"Well said, lad," exclaimed one of the fishermen; "and, like 'tatoes, a deal more useful."

"Didn't Cain an' Abel bring their offerings

to the altar?" said Amos, who gathered strength at these words of encouragement.

"Yes," cried Tom Jennen, grinning, "and Cain's 'tatoes, and turnips, and things weren't much thought on, and all sorts o' gashly trouble come out of it. Garden stuff ain't the right thing for offerings. Tellee what, lads, here's our boat with the finest haul o' mack'ral we've had this year, and Curnow's boat half full o' big hake. We arn't got no lambs, but what d'yer say, Amos Pengelly, to our taking parson up a couple o' pad o' the finest mack'ral, and half a score o' big hake?"

Tom Jennen winked at his companions as he said this, and his looks seemed to say,—

"There's a poser for him."

Amos Pengelly rubbed one ear, and then he rubbed the other, as he stood there, apparently searching for precedent for such an act. He wanted to work in something from the New Testament about the Apostles and

their fishing, and the miraculous draught, but poor Amos did not feel inspired just then, and at last, unable to find an appropriate quotation, he said,—

“I think it would be quite right, lads. It would be an offering from the harvest of the sea. Parson said he wanted all to give according to their means, and you, lads, have had a fine haul. Take up some of your best.”

“What, up to church?” cried Tom Jennen.
“It’ll make a reg’lar gashly old smell.”

“Nay,” said Amos, “they’d be fresh enough to-morrow.”

“You daren’t take ’em up to parson, Tom Jennen,” said one of the men, grinning.

Tom took a fresh bit of tobacco, spat several times down on to the boulders, and narrowly missed a mate, who responded with a lump of stone from the beach below, and then, frowning hugely, he exclaimed,—

“I lay a gallon o’ ale I dare take up a

hundred o' mack'ral and half a score o' hake, come now."

"Ye daren't," chorused several. "Parson 'll gie ye such a setting down."

"I dare," cried Tom Jennen, grinning. "I arn't feard o' all the parsons in Cornwall. I'll take it up."

"Bet you a gallon o' ale you won't," said one.

"Done," cried Tom Jennen, clapping his hand into that of his mate.

"And I'll lay you a gallon," said another.

"And I"—"and I"—"and I," cried several.

"Done! done! done!" cried Tom Jennen, grinning. "Get the fish, lads. I arn't afraid o' the gashly parson. I'll take 'em."

Amos Pengelly looked disturbed, but he said nothing.

"What's he going to do with all the stuff afterwards?" said Tom Jennen.

"Give it to the poor folk, I hear," said Amos.

"Then he shall have the fish," cried Tom Jennen. "Anyhow, I'll take 'em up."

There was a regular roar of laughter here, and a proposal was made to go and drink one of the gallons of ale at once, a proposal received with acclamation, for now that the bet had been decided upon, the want of a little Dutch courage was felt: for, in spite of a show of bravado, there was not a man amongst the group of fishermen who did not, in his religiously-superstitious nature, feel a kind of shrinking, and begin to wonder whether "parson" might not curse them for their profanity in taking up in so mocking a spirit such an offering as fish.

"Thou'lt come and have a drop o' ale, Amos Pengelly," said Tom Jennen.

"No," said Amos, "I'm going on."

"Nay, nay, come and have a drop;" and almost by force Amos was restrained, and to

a man the group joined in keeping him amongst them, feeling as if his presence, being a holy kind of man, might mitigate any pains that might befall them.

If one only had hinted at the danger, the rest would have followed, and the plan would have come to an end ; but no one would show the white feather, and, with plenty of laughing and bravado, first one and then a second gallon of ale was drunk by the group, now increased to sixteen or seventeen men ; after which they went down to the boats, the fish were selected, and four baskets full of the best were carried in procession up to the church, with Tom Jennen chewing away at his quid, his hands in his pockets, and swaggering at the head of the party.

It was a novel but a goodly offering of the silvery harvest of the sea, and by degrees the noisy talking and joking of the men subsided, till they spoke in whispers of what "parson" would say, and how they would

draw off and leave Tom Jennen to bear the brunt as soon as they had set the baskets down by the porch; and at last they moved on in silence.

There was not one there who could have analyzed his own feelings, but long before they reached the church they were stealing furtive glances one at the other, and wishing they had not come, wondering too, whether any misfortune would happen to boat or net in their next trip.

But for very shame, they would have set down the baskets on the rough stones and hurried away; but the wager had been made, and there was Tom Jennen in front rolling along, his hands deeper than ever in his pockets, first one shoulder forward and then the other. He drew a hand out once to give a tug at the rings in his brown ears, but it went back and down, and somehow, in spite of his bravado, a curious look came over Tom Jennen's swarthy face, and he owned to

himself that he didn't like "the gashly job."

"But I arn't 'fraid o' no parsons," he said to himself, "and he may say what he will. I'll win them six gallons o' ale whether he ill-wishes or curses me, or what he likes."

The dash and go of the party of great swarthy, black-haired fellows, in their blue jerseys and great boots, was completely evaporated as they reached the church, Tom Jennen being the only one who spoke, after screwing himself up.

"Stand 'em down here, lads," he said; and the baskets, with their beautiful iridescent freight of mackerel, were placed in the porch, the men being glad to get rid of their loads; and their next idea was to hurry away, but they only huddled together in a group, feeling very uncomfortable, and Tom Jennen was left standing quite alone."

"I arn't afeard," he said to himself; but he felt very uncomfortable all the same.

“He’ll whack me with big words, that’s what he’ll do, but they’ll all run off me like the sea water off a shag’s back. I arn’t feard o’ he, no more’n I am o’ Amos Pengelly;” and, glancing back at his mates, he gave a sharp rap on the church door with a penny piece that he dragged out of his right-hand pocket, just as if it had been a counter, and he was going to call for the ale he meant to win.

There was a bit of a tremor ran through the group of brave-hearted, stalwart fishermen at this, just as if they had had an electric shock; and the men who would risk their lives in the fiercest storms felt the desire to run off stronger than ever, like a pack of mischievous boys; but not one stirred.

The door was opened by Miss Pavey, who was hot and flushed, and who had a great sheaf of oats in one hand and a big pair of scissors in the other, while the opening door gave the fishermen a view of the interior of the little church, bright with flowers in pot

and bunch, while sheaves of corn, wreaths of evergreens, and artistically-piled-up masses of fruits and vegetables produced an effect very different to that imagined by the rough, seafaring men, who took a step forward to stare at the unusual sight.

Miss Pavey dropped her big scissors, which hung from her waist by a stout, white, cotton cord, something like a friar's girdle; and as her eyes fell from the rough fishermen to the great baskets of fish, she uttered the one word,—

“My!”

“Here, I want parson, miss,” growled Tom Jennen, setting his teeth, and screwing his mahogany-brown face into a state of rigid determination.

“Hallo, my lads, what have you got here?” cried a cheery voice, as Geoffrey Trethick strode up.

“Fish! Can't yer see?” growled Tom Jennen, defiantly.

“Here—here are the fishermen, Mr. Lee,” faltered Miss Pavey; and, looking flushed with exertion, and bearing a great golden orange pumpkin in his arms, the Reverend Edward Lee came to the door, laid the pumpkin where it was to form the base of a pile of vegetables, and then, with his glasses glimmering and shining, he stood framed in the Gothic doorway, with Miss Pavey and Geoffrey on either side, both looking puzzled, Tom Jennen and the fish in the porch, and the group of swarthy, blue-jerseyed fishers grouped behind.

Now was the time for the tongue-thrashing to come in, and the roar of laughter from the fishermen, who had given up all hopes of winning the ale, but who were willing enough to pay for the fun of seeing “parson’s” looks and Tom Jennen’s thrashing, especially as they would afterwards all join in a carouse and help to drink the rest of the ale.

“Brought you some fish for your decky-

rations, parson," roared Tom Jennen, who had screwed his courage up, and, as he told himself, won the bet.

There was no answer, no expostulation, no air of offence, no look of injured pride, and, above all, no roar of laughter from his assembled mates.

For a moment or two the vicar looked at the offering, and the idea of incongruity struck him, but no thought of the men perpetrating a joke against his harvest festival. The next moment a rapt look seemed to cross his face, and he took off his glasses, gazing straight before him as visions of the past floated to his mind's eye. To him, then, the bright bay behind the group suggested blue Galilee, and he thought of the humble fisher-folk who followed his great Master's steps, and the first fruits of the harvest of the sea became holy in his eyes.

Geoffrey Trethick looked at him wonderingly, and Miss Pavey felt a something akin

to awe as she watched the young hero of her thoughts, with tears in her eyes ; while he, with a slight huskiness in his voice, as he believed that at last he was moving the hearts of these rough, stubborn people, said simply,—

“I thank you, my men, for your generous offering,” and he stretched his hands involuntarily over the fish, “God’s blessing in the future be upon you when you cast your nets, and may He preserve you from the perils of the sea.”

“Amen !” exclaimed a loud voice from behind.

It was the voice of Amos Pengelly, who had stood there unobserved : and then there was utter silence, as the vicar replaced his glasses, little thinking that his few simple words and demeanour had done more towards winning over the rough fishermen before him than all his previous efforts or a year of preaching would have done.

"I am very glad," he said, smiling, and holding out his hand to Tom Jennen, who hesitated for a moment, and then gave his great, horny paw a rub on both sides against his flannel trousers before giving the delicate, womanly fingers a tremendous squeeze.

"I am very glad to see you," continued the vicar, passing Jennen, and holding out his hand to each of the fishermen in turn, hesitating for a moment as he came to Amos Pengelly, the unhallowed usurper of the holy office of the priest; but he shook hands with him warmly, beaming upon him through his glasses, while the men stood as solemn as if about to be ordered for execution, and so taken aback at the way in which their offering had been received that not one dared gaze at the other.

"Mr. Trethick, would you mind?" said the vicar, apologetically, as he stooped to one handle of the finest basket of mackerel. "How beautiful they look."

"Certainly not," said Geoffrey, who took the other handle, and they, between them, bore the overflowing basket up to the foot of the lectern.

"We'll make a pile of them here," exclaimed the vicar, whose face was flushed with pleasure; and, setting the basket down, they returned for another, Miss Pavey, scissors in hand, once more keeping guard at the door.

"I am so glad," he continued. "I wanted something by the reading-desk, and these fish are so appropriate to our town."

"Let's go and get parson ten times as many, lads," cried Tom Jennen, excitedly.

"No, no," said the vicar, laying his hand upon the rough fellow's sleeve; "there are plenty here. It is not the quantity, my lads, but the way in which the offering is made."

There was an abashed silence once more amongst the guilty group, which was broken by the vicar saying,—

“Will you come in and see what we have done?”

There was a moment's hesitation and a very sheepish look, but as the head sheep, in the person of Tom Jennen, took off his rough cap, stooped, and lifted a basket and went in on tip-toe, the rest followed, their heavy boots, in spite of their efforts, clattering loudly on the red and black-tiled floor, while the vicar took from them with his own hands the remainder of the fish, and placed them round the desk.

“I wish we could have had some pieces of ore, Mr. Trethick,” said the vicar. “I should have liked to have represented some offerings of our other great industry here.”

“I'll bring you some tin and copper, sir,” cried Amos Pengelly, who had been staring about, cap in hand, and wishing he might get up in that little stone pulpit and preach.

“And I will send you the first winnings

from Wheal Carnac, Mr. Lee," said Geoffrey, quietly; and as he spoke he saw that Rhoda Penwynn, who had been grouping ferns by the communion rails, and hearing all, was present, and had heard his words, but she turned away.

"Will you?" cried the vicar, eagerly. "I thank you both, and I pray, Geoffrey Trethick, that your venture may prosper yet."

"Thank you," said Geoffrey, quietly, and he looked smilingly in the young vicar's face till his scrutiny seemed to evoke a womanly blush.

In the meantime the fishermen, hanging close together in a group, stood cap in hand, staring round at the decorations of the church, and, lastly, at the wondrous tints upon the fish, that seemed to be intensified and made dazzling as the sun streamed through a stained glass window and fell upon the glistening heaps. One pointed to this heap of fruits, another to that, but no one spoke, and Tom

Jennen furtively removed his tobacco quid, and stuffed the dirty-brown, wet morsel into the secrecy of his trousers pocket, giving his hand a polish after upon the top of one of his high fisher-boots.

"I'll ask them all to come to church to-morrow," whispered the vicar eagerly to Geoffrey, as Rhoda now came up, and a chilly greeting passed between her and the miner.

"No," he said quickly; "don't undo your work. You have moved them more than you imagine. Let well alone."

A slight frown crossed Rhoda's brow—forced there to keep herself from marking her approval of his words; and just then a diversion occurred, for Tom Jennen gave a pull at the crisp hair upon his forehead, muttered something about not hindering the stowage, and went off on tip-toe, his mates saluting the vicar in turn, and going gently out. Miss Pavey smiled as she closed the

door behind them, and bowed in answer to their "Good day, ma'am."

Not a word was spoken as they made their way in a cluster down to the rails by the steep causeway leading to the boats, where they all grouped together, and stared from one to the other, waiting for some one to speak.

That some one proved to be Tom Jennen, who, after hunting out his quid from where it lay, in company with some half-pence, a stray button, and a lucky sixpence that acted as a charm against the evil eye, picked off some pieces of flue, tucked the quid in his cheek, and said gruffly,—

"It's a gashly old job, lads, and we've been sold."

"Ay, we have that," was chorused; and the men nodded and shook their heads.

"I wouldn't ha' done it if I'd knowed he was such a good sort," growled Tom, rather excitedly, "for he is a good sort, arn't he?"

“Ay, lad, that he is,” was the ready answer.

“And what I say is this,” cried Tom. “I won the bet fair and square, and let him as says I didn’t, say so right out like a man.”

“Ay, lad, you won it fair enough,” was the reply.

“Well then,” said Tom Jennen, “let’s go and drink parson’s health in that there ale;” and he gave his lips, which were very dry with excitement, a hearty smack.

“Ay, lad,” was chorused, “we will.”

They did; and Amos Pengelly thought it was no harm to join.

CHAPTER V.

A MEETING

"How's Madge?" said Geoffrey one morning, as he encountered Bess Prawle coming out of the bedroom with the baby in her arms.

"Very poorly," said Bess sadly. "She's wearing away, I think."

"Had I better get Dr. Rumsey to call?"

"No," said Bess quietly; "no doctor will do her any good. Poor mother's very ill too this morning. I hardly know what to do first."

"Well, it is precious hard on you, Bessie," said Geoffrey. "We make a regular slave of you amongst us. Why not have a woman to come in and help? Money isn't flush: but I can pay her."

"Oh, no, Mr. Trethick, I can manage," cried Bess. "No woman would come here to help."

Geoffrey frowned.

"We're such a bad lot, eh?"

"They don't like me," said Bess, smiling; "and father would not care to have a strange woman here."

"And so you get worked to death," said Geoffrey. "I don't like it, Bess, my lassie," he continued, while the girl flushed slightly with pleasure, as she noted the interest he took in her. "Something must be done, or I shall be obliged to take Madge away and get her lodgings elsewhere."

"You'll—you'll take Miss Mullion away?" cried Bess excitedly, as she laid her hand upon his arm. "No, no: don't do that, Mr. Trethick."

"Why not? Would you rather she stayed here?"

"Yes," said Bess softly, "I would rather

she stayed here. I'll do the best I can for her."

"God bless you, Bessie!" cried Geoffrey warmly. "You're a good, true-hearted lass, and I shall never forget your kindness. Well, I must see if some help can't be managed for you."

Bess flushed a little more deeply, for his words and interest were very sweet to her. Then, looking up cheerfully, she said that it was only a matter of a day or two.

"Father is quite taking to baby too," she said. "He nursed it for over an hour last night."

"Did he?" cried Geoffrey, laughing. "I wish I had been here. I say, Bessie, does tobacco smoke make it sneeze?"

"No: not much," said Bessie wonderingly.

"Then look here," cried Geoffrey, "I'm not going to let the old man beat me. I don't see why I shouldn't be able to nurse

as well as he. Give us hold. I'm going out to loaf on the cliff, and look at the sea, and smoke a pipe and think, and I'll take the baby."

"Mr. Trethick!" cried Bess.

"I mean it," he said, laughing. "Here, come on, young one. Which way up do you hold it, Bessie?"

"Oh, Mr. Trethick," cried Bessie. "Don't—please don't take it."

"Shall!" said Geoffrey; and to Bessie's amusement and annoyance, for a something in the act seemed to give her pain, he laughingly took the baby and held it in his arms.

"But you won't take it out, Mr. Trethick," protested Bess.

"Indeed, but I shall," he said. "I always say what I mean."

"But you can't, sir. It must be dressed, and have on its hood."

"Bother!" cried Geoffrey; "it has got

on too much already, and the sea-breeze will do it good. Come along, young top-heavy," he continued, laughing. "I shall be in the corner where I smoke my pipe, Bessie. Come and fetch the little soft dab when you've done."


He went laughing off, not seeing Bessie's countenance contract with pain, and, talking to the round-eyed, staring infant, he made his way up out of the Cove and along the cliff path, towards Carnac, to where the rock retired in one spot, forming a sunny little nook, full of soft, dry turf, stunted ferns and pink stonecrop, and scented with wild thyme. It was a place much affected by Geoffrey, where he could sit and watch the changing sea, and try to scheme his future. Here he seated himself on the turf, with his shoulders against the rock.

"Well, you are a rum little joker," he cried, as he packed the baby up between his knees, nipping its loose garments so as to

hold its little form up steady, all but the head, which kept nodding at him, the tiny intelligence therein seeming to find something vastly amusing in the dark, robust man's face, and laughing merrily every now and then, after a staring, open-eyed inspection. "Keep your mouth shut, you drivelling little morsel, will you!" cried Geoffrey, using his pocket-handkerchief to the fount-like lips. "I enjoy you, young'un, 'pon my word I do."

Here there were three or four nods and another laugh.

"Hold still, will you?" cried Geoffrey, "or you'll wobble that head off. There now, you're square. Good heavens! what a lot of toggery you have got on. Why don't she give you one good thick flannel sack, instead of all these stringed, and pinned, and buttoned wonders? That's right; go it. I'm comic, arn't I? Why, you jolly young jester, you are always on the grin."



The baby relapsed into a state of solemnity, gently bowing its head forwards and backwards, and making a few awkward clutches at Geoffrey's nose, which was nearly a yard away.

"Shouldn't have thought there was so much fun in a bit of a thing like this," continued Geoffrey, putting his hands behind his head, and resting them on the rock. "My ideas of a baby were that it was a sort of bagpipe that was always playing a discordant tune. Oh, I say, baby! For shame! I'm afraid your digestion is not perfect. In good society we always put our hand before our mouth when we make a noise like that. Here, this is the way. Hold still, you soft little atom. Why, I don't believe you've a bone in your body."

Geoffrey's hands had come from behind his head once more, and he laughingly placed one tiny, clutched fist before the wet mouth, for by no amount of persuasion could the hand be made to keep open.

“There, you fat little pudge, now hold still, and don’t keep on laughing like a clown.”

Geoffrey resumed his former position, and stared at the baby, and the baby stared at him.

“I suppose this is Geoffrey Trethick?” he said at last; “but if I had been coming along the cliff and saw myself I shouldn’t have known him. Well, it is a chance to study human life and its helplessness. I begin to see now why women like babies. They’re so soft, and helpless, and appealing. A baby is a something with which a woman can do just as she likes, for I suppose there is nothing a woman likes so much as having her own way.”

Here a spasm of mirth seemed to convulse the baby, which threw back its head and laughed, and babbled, and crowed.

“Oh, you agree with that opinion, do you, youngster? Well, that’s right. Hold still now. Do you hear? I don’t want to take you home to your mother in two pieces.

I wonder whether a baby ever did wobble off its head?"

Here there was a pause, during which Geoffrey lay back with half-closed eyes, lazily watching his charge.

"Now of course you don't know it, youngster, and it does not trouble you a bit, but you are one too many in this rolling world of ours. People talk about purity and innocence, and little things fresh from their Maker's hands; but, as my friend Lee says, you're a child of sin and shame: that's what you are.

"Do you hear?" he continued. "Why, you're laughing at it, as hard as ever you can laugh. Oh, it's funny, is it? Well, I suppose you are right, but it's no joke for poor Madge."

The baby laughed and crowed loudly here, ending by coughing till it was nearly black in the face.

"Serve you right too, you unnatural little

wretch, laughing like that at your mother's troubles. You're a chip of the old block, and no mistake. I've a good mind to pitch you off the cliff into the sea. Oh, you're not afraid, arn't you?" he continued, with his face close to the baby, who wanted re-arranging after the coughquake from which it had suffered, with the result that the two little hands that had opened during the coughing clutched and tightened themselves in Geoffrey's crisp beard, from which they refused to be torn.

"Well, look here, young one," continued Geoffrey, after freeing his beard with a good deal of trouble, and leaving two or three curling hairs in the little fists. "You seem to have made up your mind to back up public opinion, you do, and evidently intend to adopt me as your father. Well, I don't mind. I feel just in the humour to do mad things, so why not adopt you? I daresay I could manage to keep you as well as myself; but you won't get fat. I don't care. But

look here, youngster, can you sit it out if I have a pipe, and not set to and sneeze off your miserable little head ?

“ Ah, you smile acquiescence, do you ? ” said Geoffrey, “ Well, then, here goes.”

As he spoke, he began fumbling in his pocket for his pipe-case, tobacco-pouch, and match-box, all of which, in his laughing humour, he placed before the child, then stuck the match-box in one fist, the pipe in the other, and balanced the soft india-rubber pouch on the nodding head.

“ Now then, stupid ! Do you want to commit self-infanticide with phosphorus ? Don't suck those matches. It's my belief, baby, that if you were thrown down in a provision warehouse you'd prolong your existence to an indefinite extent. Will you be quiet ? ” he exclaimed, laughing aloud. “ Well, of all the funny little beggars that ever existed you are the most droll. There, now you've got your mouth all over the dye

from that leather case. Wait a moment. There, if you must smoke you shall smoke, but don't be so hungry after it that you must suck the case."

He took the pipe-case from the little hand, opened and took out the pipe, wiped it, and then playfully closed the tiny fingers round the blackened stem of the old meerschaum, and guided the amber mouth-piece into the wet mouth.

The baby began to suck and rub the mouth-piece eagerly against its little gums, till it had a suspicion of the intense bitter of the pipe, when the look of content upon the soft, round little features gradually changed into such a droll grimace of disgust that Geoffrey lay back and laughed till the tears came into his eyes, and he wiped them away, and laughed heartily again and again.

"Oh, you rum little customer!" he exclaimed; "you've done me no end of good. I have not laughed like that since I came

down to Carnac. Why, you've made my ribs ache, that you have—*the devil!* ”

For at that moment, briskly walking along the cliff-path, Rhoda turned the corner, and came right upon the pair.

Rhoda stopped as if petrified, and a fierce look of indignation flashed from her eyes.

Geoffrey was as much surprised, but he had more self-control, and, returning the indignant glance with one full of defiance, he kept his place in the sunny nook, lying right back, and went on tossing the baby to and fro, balancing it on his knees, and then pretending to make it walk up his broad chest, which, however, seemed to heave up into a mountain beneath the tiny feet.

The silence in that sheltered nook was painful, and the low moan of the restless sea even seemed to be hushed, as the child threw back its little head, and kicked and laughed and crowed with delight.


“ Pitiful, contemptible coward ! ” thought

Rhoda, biting her lip to keep down her anger. "And I once cared about this degraded wretch!"

"I wouldn't move to save my life!" thought Geoffrey. "You doubting, incredulous, proud, faithless woman! You shall beg my pardon yet."

He had a wonderful mastery over himself as far as his face was concerned, and he returned Rhoda's angry look with one as bitter, if not worse; but though he could keep smooth his face, he was not wholly master of his emotions, as it proved.

For just as Rhoda was trying to summon up force enough to make her tear herself away with a look of intensified scorn and contempt, Geoffrey's hands, which held the baby, instead of lightly tossing it up and down, involuntarily gripped its little tender ribs so fiercely that the merry crow was changed into a loud wail of pain, and, with a hysterical laugh that jarred through every



nerve of Geoffrey's frame, Rhoda rushed away, to burst, as soon as she was out of sight, into a passion of tears.

"You little wretch!" roared Geoffrey, springing up and shaking the baby. "What do you mean by making me look such a fool? Be quiet, or I'll throw you into the sea. Hang me, what an idiot I must have looked," he cried, stamping up and down with the baby in his hands, and then stuffing it roughly in a niche in the rock. "Be quiet, will you," he roared, shaking his fist in the poor little thing's face; "be quiet, or I'll smash you!"

The cessation of the shaking, and the appearance of the fist close to its snub nose had the desired effect. The storm passed, and sunshine burst forth over the little face, followed by a laugh and a futile effort to catch at the hand.

"Poor little beggar!" cried Geoffrey, carefully taking up the helpless thing once more.

“ There, I don’t care, do I, baby ? ” he cried, laughing and grinding his teeth together as the tiny fists grasped and held on to his beard, while the little eyes laughed in his. “ Let her see me, and think what she likes. Come along, young ’un. I’m not cross with you. You couldn’t help it. Here, hold your little wet button-hole still, and I’ll give you a kiss. No, no—kiss : don’t suck, stupid ! ” he said, laughing ; and then the anger passed away, as a convulsion swept over the tiny face, and consequent upon a hair from Geoffrey’s beard touching the apology for a nose, the baby sneezed three times.

“ Well done, young one,” he cried. “ Feel better ? No ? Give us another.”

He raised the little thing once more and kissed it, and as he lowered it again something prompted him to look back, and as he did he saw that Rhoda was in full view upon the cliff, that she had turned, and that she must have seen that kiss.

Rage took possession of his soul again, and he nearly made the child shriek in his fierce grip.

“Spying, eh?” he cried. “Well, if you will be a petty child, ma’am, so will I;” and, hugging the baby in his arms, he walked on, kissing it over and over again, till meeting Bessie Prawle, he cried out, “Here : catch !” and tossed the little thing into her arms.

CHAPTER VI.

VISITORS AT GWENNAS.

RHODA PENWYNN had no idea of going to Gwennas Cove one morning when she went off, in a dreamy, forgetful way for a walk. She was low-spirited and wretched. Her father's troubles and heavy losses were an endless anxiety, and, to her sorrow, she saw that he had of late grown reckless. How he was situated, or what he had lost, she could not tell, but there was a grey, wrinkled look about his face that went to her very heart. One thing was very evident, and that was that the banker had become entangled in some venture—John Tregenna had hinted as much one evening when at their house, but he had

merely hinted, and she could not ask him more.

One thing was very evident, and that was that people had lost confidence in Penwynn, the banker. Other people might dabble in mines, lose, and begin again; but the man to whom the savings of others were entrusted, must be above reproach—above suspicion of speculation; and the Wheal Carnac affair had been a heavy blow in more ways than one.

Mr. Penwynn was not long in finding this out, for it resulted in a quarrel with the principals of the great Cornish bank, of which his was but a branch. Somehow—he never knew by what means—they had become prejudiced against him, and a rapid depreciation of his value in Carnac resulted when it was known that he was no longer over the bank.


Then came demands upon him for amounts trusted to him to invest—a regular con-

tinuous drain ; and Rhoda awoke to the fact that a change in their position, for the worse, was rapidly coming on.

She bore the knowledge as cheerfully as she could, working hard to comfort her father, bidding him not trouble about her, but to pay to the uttermost farthing every demand.

"I shall not mind being poor," she said to him, but she felt that she did not know all, and after long thought and trouble the feeling would always come upon her that she must leave all to fate, for she could not make her future even if she tried.

There was something very suggestive in John Tregenna's manner to her now. He was never, in the slightest degree, effusive. If anything, he was rather cold, but at times there was a look in his eye that told her he was waiting his time ; and more than once, in the bitterness of her spirit, she had thought of the possibility of his some day asking her again to be his wife.



What should she say if he did?

No! The answer came readily enough, for a pang shot through her as she thought of Geoffrey Trethick, and wondered whether she could forgive him for the wrong he had done. She loved him still. She knew that, and in time—perhaps even now, if he came to her in humbleness and confessed his fault—she could have said forgiving words. Her pride would have forbidden her to listen to him. There was forgiveness.

But that was all. He had been set up in the innermost niche of her heart—an idol whom she had worshipped. From thence he had fallen, and as the idol lay broken she had seen that what she thought sterling gold was but miserable potter's clay.

Still there was her love for him—the love once roused never to be completely crushed out. It burned still upon the altar before the empty niche. The idol was gone, and a soft vapour rose concealing the emptiness of

the place—a place made often more dim and indistinct by her moistened eyes.

If he had only come to beg forgiveness she would not have cared, but he had taken up his stubborn stand, and to the very last time they had met his eyes looked at her with an angry defiance that made her heart beat fast with rage.

It was from no curiosity—there was not even a faint hope of meeting Geoffrey—that she took that path, but a trick of fate, and she started and turned pale, on suddenly raising her eyes, to see that she was only some fifty yards from Prawle's cottage.

Bessie was standing by the door knitting, and the blood flushed into Rhoda's cheeks as she saw what was by her side.

She saw that Bessie had seen her, and to have gone back would have looked cowardly; so she kept on, feeling pretty sure that at that time of day Geoffrey Trethick would not be there.

"I have not been to see you for a long time now, Bessie," said Rhoda, making an effort to master her emotion and look calm.

"No, miss. My mother has often said she wished you would come. Will you go in and see her?"

Rhoda hesitated.

"Father's out, miss. He has gone off in the boat with Mr. Trethick, to try for pollack. We're quite alone."

At the name of Trethick, Rhoda shrank away, but, setting her teeth, she determined not to give up like some weak girl. Geoffrey Trethick was nothing to her now, and, as she thought that, a passionate, angry desire to stand face to face with the woman who had robbed her of his love made her take a step towards the door.

Bessie bent down and picked up the baby, which laughed and kicked as she held it in her arms, but Rhoda snatched away her eyes.

She hated it, she told herself; and, following Bessie into the gloomy room, she looked towards where Mrs. Prawle was wont to sit, but the chair was empty.

“Mother is lying down in the bedroom,” said Bessie. “I’ll tell her you are here, miss.”

As she spoke, Bessie turned aside to place the baby in a pair of extended hands before leaving the place.

Rhoda had not seen who was seated in the darkened portion of the room, but Bessie’s act told her who it was, and turning sharply, her veins tingling, and her head giddy with her anger, she stood face to face with Madge Mullion, the girl she hated in a way that she could not have thought possible.

As she stood there, her fingers clenched together, the spirit was in her to strike the girl—to curse her; but, when she saw the pale, weary-looking face, and the great, staring eyes of the young mother, as she clasped her

little one to her breast, all Rhoda's anger seemed to pass away as rapidly as it had come, and in its place there was a feeling of profound pity.

They stood there gazing in each other's eyes for some minutes without speaking, Rhoda proud and erect, Madge weak and piteous in the extreme; and, as if in dread of her visitor, she held her little one between them as a shield.

"Are you not ashamed to look me in the face?" said Rhoda, sternly.

"Am I not weak and suffering enough," retorted Madge, "that you say these cruel words? Oh, Miss Penwyn, let me try and explain—let me tell you how I have suffered for the pain I have caused you."

"Hold your tongue," said Rhoda, coldly. "Don't speak to me. I did not come to see you. Do not speak to me again."

As Rhoda spoke she saw the poor girl's eyelids droop, and a ghastly pallor came over

her face. She was fainting, and had not the visitor involuntarily caught the little one from its mother's hands, as she fell back in the corner of the sofa, it would have dropped upon the brick floor.

The child uttered a piteous cry, and seemed to stare with astonishment at her who held it from her, stunned almost at her position. But as the babe looked up in her handsome face, the wrinkles in its little countenance departed, and it began to laugh and coo, trying to catch at one of the long curls pendent above its face.

The little one seemed to disarm her resentment. She held it closer to her, forgetful of its mother, and one of its little pinky hands went up now and clutched at her face.

She could not help it. There was no one to see, and Rhoda seemed forced to obey an uncontrollable impulse. One moment her face was hard and stern; then there was a

quiver, a softening of the muscles, the tears gathered in her eyes, and began to fall upon the little upturned face.

"It at least is innocent," she muttered, as she held the little thing in her bosom, and kissed it tenderly again and again.

There was a curious, yearning look in Rhoda Penwynn's countenance during these fleeting moments. Then, recalling her position, she hastily laid the child upon the rug, looking cold, hard, and stern once more, as she took out her vinaigrette, and held it to the fainting girl's face.

"Oh, miss, is she ill?" cried Bessie, entering the room.

"Yes," said Rhoda, coldly; "she has fainted."

"Oh, miss," cried Bessie, reproachfully, "you have not been saying cruel things to her?"

"And if I have, what then?" said Rhoda, sternly.

“Why it’s a shame—a cruel shame,” cried Bessie, angrily. “Why did you come here to reproach her for what she has done? Don’t you see how ill she is, perhaps not long for this world? Oh, Miss Penwynn, it’s a shame!”

Rhoda flushed with anger, but she would not speak. She told herself that she deserved what she had encountered by her foolish visit; and, stung by the girl’s reproaches, and angry with herself, she hurried out of the cottage and hastened towards her home.

She was bitterly angry with herself, more angry against Geoffrey, whom, in her heart, she somewhat inconsistently accused of having caused her the degradation which she told herself she had suffered but now.

She bit her lips as she thought of her folly in going there, for she told herself that every one in Carnac would know where she had been; and hardly had she writhed beneath the sting of this thought than she

encountered old Mr. Paul walking slowly along the cliff.

She would have passed him with a bow, but he stopped short and held out his hand, in which she placed her own, feeling shocked to see how the old man had changed.

"The old painters were right," he said abruptly, as he retained her hand.

"Old painters? Right?" faltered Rhoda.

"Yes, yes," said the old man, "when they painted their angels in the form of a beautiful woman. God bless you, my dear, you are a good, forgiving girl! I know where you have been."

"Oh, this is horrible!" ejaculated Rhoda, as she hurried away. "I cannot bear it. What am I to suffer next?"

She would have turned out of the path, but unless she descended to the rugged beach there was no other way back home; and, as if to make her miseries culminate, she had not gone another quarter of a mile

before she encountered Miss Pavey, with a thick veil shrouding her countenance, and a basket in her hand.

They stopped and looked at each other curiously, and as Miss Pavey raised her veil there was a red spot burning in each of her cheeks.

“Have you been for a walk, dear?” she faltered.

“Yes,” said Rhoda, abruptly. “And you—are you going for a walk?”

Miss Pavey trembled, and it was evident that she was having a battle with her feelings. She was afraid to speak, and she looked supplicatingly in Rhoda’s eyes, which were fixed upon her in the most uncompromising way.

For a moment a subterfuge was trembling upon her lips, but honesty conquered, and, looking more bravely in Rhoda’s face, she said,—

“Yes, dear. Mr. Lee wishes it. I—I

didn't like it at first ; but he says it is a duty, and I will do it, whatever anybody else may say."

She said these last words almost passionately, as she looked defiantly at Rhoda.

"And what are you going to do, Miss Pavey?"

"No, no, dear Rhoda, let it be Martha still," pleaded the little woman.

"Well then—Martha," said Rhoda, with a smile.

"I am going to see, and take a few comforts to poor Madge Mullion," said the little woman, with an apologetic look; and then, after another effort, "I have been twice before. Where have you been, dear?"

Rhoda looked at her half scornfully, and the change that had come over her weak little friend struck her as being almost absurd, as, in a defiant way, she said sharply,—

"I? Where have I been? Where you

are going now. I have been to see Madge Mullion and that man's child."

She hurried away with her hand pressed upon her heart, as the words seemed to have leaped from her lips, while she felt that if she stayed there a moment longer she would burst out into a hysterical fit of laughter; and this feeling was still upon her as she passed through the rugged streets of the little town and hastened home.

CHAPTER VII.

OLD PRAWLE WISHES TO INVEST.

THE rugged pile of rocks along by the ruins of the old mine was a favourite spot with Geoffrey in these troubled days. From hence, when he had clambered into a sheltered nook, where there was a little natural platform, he could see the track towards the town, and think of that evening when, glorified by the wonderful sunset, he had enjoyed that strange dream of love and hope. Every grey-lichened stone seemed to light up once more as he took his seat there, and reflected those wondrous tints that had for the moment coloured his life before all had turned grey and gloomy once again.

He could see, too, Wheal Carnac from where he used to sit with his back against the natural wall, looking as hard and grim as the rock itself.

There lay the unlucky mine and the stony promontory, with the surges breaking fiercely at its base, as if the tide resented its presence and was always striving to tear down a pile that had served to crush the young man's fortunes.

Time stole on but his position remained the same; for though the vicar had urged him again and again to make some effort to clear himself, he had sternly refused.

"No," he said, "I shall wait; and if you value my acquaintance, or friendship, if you like to call it so, I beg that you will say nothing to a soul upon my behalf."

The vicar sighed, but he allowed himself to be swayed by Geoffrey, whom he feared to tell of his suspicions concerning the state of affairs at An Morlock, for he could not help

seeing how rapidly John Tregenna was becoming Mr. Penwynn's master, and how helplessly the banker was drifting to a bitter end.

Geoffrey's old blackened meerschaum used to be brought out, and as he leisurely smoked he used to think of all that had taken place since his first arrival in Carnac, and wonder whether he had been wanting in any way in his duties to those who had entrusted him with so important a task.

He was seated there one morning when, in the midst of the reverie in which he was indulging, he was interrupted by the sound of footsteps, and, looking up, he saw old Prawle approaching and beckoning to him in a mysterious fashion.

"What's the matter?" said Geoffrey, starting up.

"I want you," whispered the old man, though probably there was not a soul within half a mile.

“ Well, what do you want ? ”

“ Business—particular business. Come down to my place and talk.”

“ Why can’t you talk here ? ” said Geoffrey, gruffly.

“ No, no. Come to my place.”

Soured, disappointed, and out of humour, Geoffrey was on the point of declining ; but the old man had manifested so kindly a disposition towards him of late that he followed him without another word along the cliff to the Cove, where they descended the rough stairs to the bit of a cave ; where the old man, instead of producing brandy and tobacco as Geoffrey expected, took down an old ship’s lantern, saw that it was well trimmed, placed some matches inside, and then placed it inside his rough jacket.

“ Wait a bit,” he said, “ and I’ll show you ; ” and he laughed audibly. “ Look here. You carry this compass,” he continued, taking one from a shelf.

"But what do you want? What are you going to do?" said Geoffrey.

"I'll tell you soon," said the old man. "I've been talking it over with my Bessie, and she says I may trust you, and that I am to do it. I haven't lived to my time for nothing."

"I'm much obliged to Miss Bessie for her trust," said Geoffrey bitterly; "but what is it? Are you going to dig up some of your old hoards of money?"

"No, no; no, no," chuckled the old fellow, grimly. "I don't bury my money. I know what I'm about. Come along."

Geoffrey followed him down the rest of the rough way to the rocky shore, where the old man's boat was lying, and between them they ran her out into the tiny harbour, formed by a few jutting pieces of rock, got in, and, after arranging some great boulders as ballast, old Prawle was about to take both sculls, when Geoffrey took one.

"Here, I'll pull as well," he said. "I want work."

"Pull then," said the old man. As soon as he had placed the lantern and compass in the stern of the boat, the oars fell with a splash, and, timing the effort exactly, they rode out on a gently-heaving wave, and then old Prawle kept the boat about fifty yards from where the waves beat on the time-worn rocks.

"Tide's just right," said the old man. "Easy. Pull steadily, my lad. There's no hurry. Hear about old Master Penwynn?"

"No. What?" said Geoffrey, sharply.

"They say things are going very bad with him, and that he'll soon be as poor as you."

"No," said Geoffrey. "I did hear that he had losses some months ago. But is this true?"

"P'r'aps not," said old Prawle, gruffly. "Tom Jennen and some of 'em were talking about it. Amos Pengelly heard it, too."

Geoffrey was silent, and his heart began to throb as he thought of Rhoda, and of how it must bitterly affect her. Only a few months ago, and it seemed as if he had secured for her the fortune of a princess; now she was to be as poor as he, and they were still estranged.

"You oughtn't to mind," said old Prawle, laughing. "Penwynn did not behave so well to you."

"Would you mind changing the conversation, Mr. Prawle?" said Geoffrey, sharply, when the old man uttered a low chuckle and went on steadily rowing.

"Are we going to fish?" said Geoffrey, after they had been rowing along in the shadow of the rocks for some time.

"Yes: to fish for money, my lad," said the old fellow. "Pull steady."

Geoffrey obeyed, and after his long days of enforced idleness, during which his thoughts had seemed to eat into his mind

like cankers, there was something quite refreshing in the rowing over the heaving sea, and joined to it there was a spice of excitement to know what the old man really meant.

They rode on and on with the bright waters of the bay on one side, and the weed-hung, weather-worn granite on the other, where every wave that ran beneath them seemed to playfully dash at the rocks, to lift the long, tangled brown and olive-green weeds, toss them, and deck them with gems as if they were the tresses of some uncouth sea-monster, before dashing up the wall that checked their way, and falling back in spray.

After a time, as Geoffrey glanced over his shoulder, he caught sight of the towering chimney above Wheal Carnac, and as he snatched his gaze, as it were, away, he found that old Prawle was watching him, and he uttered a low, chuckling laugh.

“Yon’s the mine,” he said, looking at Geoffrey curiously, as the young man took so

tremendous a tug at his oar that the boat was pulled slightly round.

“Easy, my lad; easy,” said old Prawle.
“Don’t you like the look of the mine?”

Geoffrey did not answer, but pulled away, though with less violence; and so they rowed on till suddenly old Prawle exclaimed, as they were lying now well under the promontory,—

“You’d best give me the other oar.”

Without a word Geoffrey obeyed, and watched him curiously as, after taking both sculls now, he turned the boat’s head towards the rocks, and waiting his time, as he pulled gently on, he paused till a good wave came in, and then, balancing the little boat on the top, allowed it to be carried right in between a couple of masses of rock, barely wide enough apart to admit of its passing. Then, pulling one oar sharply, he turned round by another mass of rock, and Geoffrey found that they were in smooth water, floating in

under a rough arch, so low that they had to bend right down in the boat for a minute; after which the ceiling rose, and he found that they were in a rugged cavern, whose light only came from the low opening through which they had passed. It was a gloomy, weird-looking place, in which the waves plashed, and sucked, and sounded hollow, echoing, and strange, each wave that came softly rolling in, carrying them forward as it passed under them, and then seemed to continue its journey into the darkness ahead.

"Mouth's covered at high water," said old Prawle, as he laid the oars in the boat.

"Then how shall we get out?" said Geoffrey, to whom the idea of being caught by the tide, and drowned in such a place as this had, in spite of his troubles, no attraction.

"Same as we got in," growled old Prawle.
"'Fraid?"

"No," said Geoffrey, sturdily. "I don't want to be caught though."

"I've been several times," said the old man, with a hoarse chuckle. "It scared me the first time, but I soon found there was plenty of room."

"Bit of smuggling?" said Geoffrey.

"Iss, my son," said the old man, with a laugh. "I don't believe there's a soul ever been in this zorn besides me."

"But you don't smuggle now?" said Geoffrey.

"No, not unless I wan't a drop of brandy or Hollands gin."

"Then why have you come here?"

"Ha, ha, ha! I'll show you," said the old man, laughing. "I haven't lived here for nothing. Wait till I've lit the lantern, and we'll see."

He took the matches, and as he struck one the roof and sides of the cave seemed to flash with metallic green, but Geoffrey saw that it was only the bright, wet moss that he had found in the adit of the old mine, and

he sat there watching the old man, as he lit and closed the lantern, set it down on the thwart, and then proceeded to guide the boat forward along the narrow channel of water, over which the granite roof spread in a low arch, sometimes rising ten or twenty feet, but more often coming down as if to crush them.

They must have gone several hundred yards, and still they went on, though it grew much more narrow, till there was little more than room enough for the boat to go along, but the water seemed deep beneath her keel, and the cavern or rift still wound on.

"What have you got in here, Father Prawle?" said Geoffrey, at length, after sitting for some time watching the strange effects of light and shadow, as the old man forced the boat along by thrusting the boat-hook against the roof or sides.

"Nothing," said the old man, laconically.

"Then why have we come?"

“Wait and see.”

“All right,” said Geoffrey, and, leaning back, he began to think of Rhoda, and of the news he had heard, wondering the while whether she would ever be brave enough to do him justice, and frankly own that she was wrong.

Then he thought of her being poor, and, looking at it in one light, he did not feel very sorry, though he felt a kind of pang to think that she would miss so many of the old refinements of life.

“Which—*vide* self—any one can very well do without,” he said, half aloud.

“What?” growled his guide.

“I was only muttering, Father Prawle. How much farther are we going?”

“Not far.”

The old man forced the boat along for quite another hundred yards, and then, taking hold of the painter, he leaped upon a rock and secured the rope.

"Jump out, and bring the lamp and the compass, my lad," said the old fellow, in his rough, grim way ; and on Geoffrey landing he said to the old man, sharply,—

"Is there ore in here?"

"Nothing but some poor tin," was the reply. "But look there, my lad. The boat won't go up that narrow bit, but that runs on at least a hundred fathom, for I've waded as far as that."

"What, up that narrow hole?" said Geoffrey, as he peered along a place that looked a mere crack in the rock floored with water.

"Yes, up that narrow place. Now what do you say?"

"I don't say anything," replied Geoffrey.

"Why have we come here?"

"Bah! Take your compass, lad. Which way does that bit of a cut run?"

"Nor-east by east," said Geoffrey, holding the compass flat.

"Well, suppose you drive right through

that nat'ral adit, as you may call it, for thirty or forty, or, p'r'aps fifty fathom, what would you hit?"

"I see your meaning now," cried Geoffrey, excitedly. "Of course, yes, we must strike one of the galleries in Wheal Carnac which run under the promontory from the other side."

"And if you do drive through, what then?" chuckled the old man.

"Why, you'll have an adit that will clear the water off as fast as it comes in."

"To be sure you will," said Prawle.

"But only to a certain level," said Geoffrey, despondently. "It is of no use, Prawle; the tin would be fathoms below."

"D—n the tin, boy," cried the old man, excitedly; and, as they stood on a narrow shelf of rock there, he gripped Geoffrey fiercely by the arm. "Look here, you, Master Trethick, no man ever did me an ill turn but what I paid him off, and no man ever did me a good turn but I paid him off."

“ I never did you an ill turn,” said Geoffrey.

“ No,” said the old man, “ but you did me a good one, and I wouldn’t have minded now if you’d have had my Bessie ; but that’s nayther here nor there. If she likes lame Amos Pengelly better o’ the two, why she must have him ; but you helped her when she was hard put to it, and now look here, I’m going to do you a good turn, and myself too.”

“ How ? I tell you that your adit would be good for nothing,” cried Geoffrey.

“ Tchah ! Look here,” cried the old man, pulling a sale bill out of his pocket. “ Here it all is—Wheal Carnac.”

“ Put the thing away ; it makes me feel half mad to see it. I tore one down,” cried Geoffrey.

“ You be quiet,” continued the old man, holding the bill against the mossy rock, so that the light from the lantern fell upon the big letters.

“ Here you are, you see—To be sold by

auction, at the M, A, R, T, Mart, Token-house-yard, unless pre—vi—ously disposed of by private contract.”

“Don’t I tell you it half drives me mad to think of the mine being sold?”

“With all the pumping and other gear, nearly new engines, and modern machinery,” read on old Prawle.

“Are you doing this to tantalize me, Prawle?” cried Geoffrey. “The whole affair will go for a song.”

“To be sure,” chuckled the old man. “That’s what I’ve been waiting for, my lad—for a song, a mere song, eh?”

“It’s horrible!” cried Geoffrey, despairingly, “when there’s tin enough there—”

“Hang the tin, I tell you! It’s grand, boy, grand. Look, Mr. Trethick, go up to London and buy it.”

“Buy it?” said Geoffrey.

“Yes; buy it for as little as you can get it for.”

"What, to sell the machinery out of it? No, that I won't."

"Nay, nay, to work it, lad. Buy it, and you and me will make fortunes, eh?"

"I tell you that your plan's worse than useless. The ore is far below the level to which we should get the water."

"Give's your hand, Trethick," said the old man, sharply. "Will you swear that you'll play fair with me?"

"If you like," said Geoffrey.

"I'll take your word without a swear," said the old man. "Shake hands, lad."

Geoffrey carelessly gave him his hand, which the old man gripped.

"Now look here," he said, "I'll trust you, and I'll find you the money to go and buy that mine."

"But it will be throwing your money away," said Geoffrey.

"Then I'll throw it away," cried old Prawle. "I want Wheal Carnac, and I've always

meant to have her. Now then, will you go and buy her for me, and work her for me afterwards on shares?"

"Yes, if you like," said Geoffrey, sadly. "We might, perhaps, hit upon something; and anyhow I don't think you will have to pay so much that you would lose."

"Go and buy her for me, then. As soon as we get back you shall go up to London and buy her for me as cheap as you can. You can go to the old lawyer I'll tell you of for the money to pay down, as much as is wanted, and then just you come back to me and I'll talk to you about what I mean to do."

"Very good," said Geoffrey, "I will; but it means a good bit of money."

"You buy it," said old Prawle; "and whatever you do, don't let it go; but buy it as cheaply as you can."

Geoffrey stood looking at the old man for a few minutes, and in those few minutes his

whole connexion with the mine seemed to pass in review before him; and as it did, he asked himself whether he should be doing right in letting the old man invest his money like this.

“Well,” said Prawle, “what are you thinking about?”

“You,” he said sharply. “Suppose, when you have spent your savings on this mine, it should turn out a dead failure?”

“Well, what then?”

“You would lose something.”

“Well, I know that, don’t I? Do you suppose I’m a babby. There, I’ve bided my time, my lad, and I know what I’m doing. Are you ready?”

“Yes,” said Geoffrey.

“And you’ll stick to me, my lad, when the mine’s my property?”

“I will, Prawle,” said Geoffrey, earnestly, as he shook off his forebodings; “and, somehow or another, I’ll make it pay.”

"That'll do, my lad; we understand one another, and you won't repent it. Just give one more look at your compass."

Geoffrey did so.

"Now then, you feel pretty sure you can hit the workings from here?"

"Yes, I feel certain," said Geoffrey; "and it will relieve the mine without pumping, but not so that we can get the tin."

"That'll do," said the old man, nodding. "Come along."

He led the way to the boat, and once more kneeling in her bows, he directed their way along the subterranean passage, while Geoffrey leaned back in the stern watching him, and thinking that if he had been an artist he would have desired no better suggestion for a picture of Charon ferrying some unfortunate soul across the Styx, so weird and darksome was their way, so strange and gloomy the shadows cast, till once more in the distance appeared a faint gleam of light

playing upon the surface of the water. Then the low arch came into view, and soon after they were out in broad daylight once again, and rowing steadily towards the Cove.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOO LATE.

THERE was no time to lose if he intended to be present at the sale, so hastily putting a few things in a bag, Geoffrey bade Madge good-bye, and brought a smile in her thin, worn face as he took up the little one and kissed it, giving it a toss, and setting it off crowing and laughing before replacing it in Bessie's arms.

“Any commission for town, ladies?” he said; “ribbons, laces, or what do you say to a new hood for the squire here?”

Just then the dark face of old Prawle appeared at the door, and, reminding him of his commission, he started off at once to catch the coach.

"It's a rum world," he said, as he gazed at the smokeless chimneys of the great mine as he went on, and then, leaning more to his task, he began to picture the place busy once more, with its panting engines, and the click and rattle of the ore-reducing machinery.

"I'll show old Penwynn yet," he said to himself, "that there's money to be made out of the place. Poor old fellow, though, it will be a grievous disappointment to him, and he will feel it deeply."

He walked on, with his eyes still fixed on the promontory upon which the mine was standing, and so immersed was he in thought that he almost ran up against two people before he saw them.

"I beg—"

He would have said "your pardon," but the words froze upon his lips, and he went by feeling half stunned ; for the couple he had passed were Rhoda Penwynn and Tregenna,

the former looking deadly pale as his eyes encountered hers for a moment, the latter calm, self-possessed, and supercilious.

Geoffrey could not trust himself to look back, but tore along the cliff path at a tremendous rate, feeling ready at any moment to break into a run, but refraining by an effort.

His journey was for the time being forgotten, and he saw nothing but the finale of a life-drama, whose last scene was a wedding, with Rhoda the wife of the man she had formerly rejected, and his heart beat heavily and fast.

He was moved more than he thought it possible under the circumstances; and in the hot rage that took possession of him he could find no palliation of Rhoda's conduct. It was evident, he said to himself, that she was engaged to John Tregenna now, and that the last faint hope that, like some tiny spark, he had kept alive was now extinct.

“ Ah, Trethick ! Where are you going ? ”

“ Eh ? Oh, Lee, is that you ? ”

“ Yes ; I’m glad to see you. Why don’t you come down to me ? ”

“ What, for Miss Pavey to look horrors, and want to fumigate the house, after the advent of such a social leper ? ” he said laughingly.

“ My dear Trethick, why will you talk like this—and to me ? ” said the vicar, smiling.

“ But I am stopping you. Were you going somewhere ? ”

“ I ? No. Not I. Yes I was, though,” he exclaimed. “ I am going up to London. I forgot. ”

The vicar looked at him wonderingly, his manner was so strange.”

“ Oh, I’m not going out of my mind, man. It’s all right,” exclaimed Geoffrey, laughing. The next moment his face became ashy white, and his eyes seemed to dilate as, in the distance, he caught sight of Rhoda and Tregenna coming back into the town.

The vicar saw the direction of his gaze, followed it, and sighed, for he had seen the couple together half an hour before.

Geoffrey coloured as he saw that the vicar was evidently reading his thoughts, and he said lightly,—

“Yes, I’m off to town for a day or two, but you need not say I’m going. Good-bye.”

He did not pause to shake hands, but strode hastily away, secured his seat upon the coach, and that night was well on his way to Plymouth.

Try how he would he could not shake off the recollection of his meeting with Rhoda. It was nothing to him, he kept on assuring himself, but there was her pale face ever confronting him; and the more he strove to call her heartless, cold, and cruel, the more the recollection of their short, happy engagement came back.

He was bound now on a fresh expedition, whose aim was to secure the mine and to make

money, and, with a half-laugh, he exclaimed, "What for?"

He frowned heavily the next moment, as he saw that his quick utterance had drawn the attention of a couple of his fellow-passengers; and determining to master what he called his childish emotion, he thought of Rhoda all the more.

This went on for hours, till he felt so exasperated with what he called his weakness that he would gladly have got out of the carriage at the next station, and walked a few miles to calm himself; but this was, of course, impossible, and he sat there listening to the rattle of the train, as it seemed to make up words and sentences, which kept on repeating themselves with a most irritating effect.

Station after station was passed, and the time glided on till he found it was now half-past ten.

They were due at Bristol half an hour past midnight, and a train left there soon after,

reaching London about half-past four in the morning, when, after a few hours' rest, he would be in ample time for the sale.

At the best of times a railway journey by night is trying to the nerves of the strongest; to a man in Geoffrey Trethick's state of excitement it was irritating in the extreme. He tried every position he could scheme to make himself comfortable, and have a few hours' rest, but in vain. Every attitude was wearisome and produced irksomeness, till, in utter despair, he let down the window to gaze at the murky night they were rushing through.

This produced a remonstrance from a fellow-passenger, and he drew the window up again, and tried once more to think only of the mine and of old Prawle's venture; but, as a matter of course, the thoughts of the old wrecker brought up others of his daughter and his invalid wife, when, naturally enough, the other invalid—poor Madge—followed; and then came the whole history of his con-

nexion with her family and his dismissal by Rhoda, and then—*crash* !

It was instantaneous—one moment they were going along at a rapid rate, the next there was a sharp, deafening crash ; the glass flew in shivers, the strong carriage seemed to collapse like a bandbox, and they were at a standstill.

There were four passengers in the same compartment, and as soon as Geoffrey recovered from the stunning violence with which he was hurled against his opposite neighbour he roused himself to afford help. Fortunately, however, beyond a shaking, they had all escaped, and, after a struggle, they managed to get out through one of the windows on to the line.

Here all was confusion—lights were flashing, steam was hissing, and the shouts of the guards and engine-drivers were mingled with the cries and shrieks of the passengers, many of whom were imprisoned in the broken

carriages, and some time elapsed before they could be set free.

It was the old story—a luggage train was being shunted and not sufficient time allowed, with the result that the fast night train had dashed at full speed into the goods trucks, and they and the brake-van formed a pile upon which the engine of the fast train seemed to have made an effort to climb; and then, defeated, the monster had fallen right over upon its side, setting fire to the trucks upon which it had dashed.

Fortunately the speed at which they had been going seemed to have saved the passengers. There were bruises and cuts without number, but no serious injury to person. The train, though, was in a state of chaos; both lines were badly blocked, and when Geoffrey could get an answer to a question, the reply was not encouraging, for he was told that at least six hours must elapse before he could go on.

The six expanded themselves into eight, and the consequence was that all Geoffrey's plans were upset. The probability now was that he would not reach town until the sale was over, and, by a strange reversal, what he had looked upon as worthless the day before, now grew into a thing of such value that he was ready to make any sacrifice to carry out his commission in its entirety:

He was in a peculiar position, for he could not telegraph to the auctioneer to appoint an agent to bid for him, for he was not able to say to what price he would go. Old Prawle had left it to him, but even then he could not say "Bid so much." Everything must depend on what took place, and, under the circumstances, he felt that there was nothing for it but to make the best of his way there on the chance of being in time.

London at last, and, without waiting a moment, he jumped into a cab, and bade the man drive to the city.

It is a long drive from Paddington to the Mart, and when he reached the place and had seen in which room the sale was to take place, he ran up to find another sale going on. Wheal Carnac had been up nearly an hour before.

After a little searching he found the auctioneer.

"Wheal Carnac was bought in, I suppose?" said Geoffrey carelessly.

"No, sir, not this time," said the auctioneer. "That mine's an old friend here, but it has found a purchaser once more."

"Did it make much?" said Geoffrey hoarsely.

"Went for a song. Not half the value of the machinery."

Geoffrey bit his lip.

"Who bought it?"

"Can't say, sir. Or, stop a moment. Yes, of course," he said, referring to his books. "It is a firm of solicitors. Agents for the real purchaser, I suppose."

Geoffrey obtained the name of the firm of solicitors, found it was in Serjeant's Inn, and went straight there, asked for the principal, and was shown in.

"Wheal Carnac? Oh yes," said a little, sharp-looking grey man. "We—that is—an agent from this house purchased it;" and he looked curiously at Geoffrey.

"For a client of yours, I presume?" said Geoffrey.

"Certainly you may presume so if you like, sir," said the little lawyer.

"And possibly he would be ready to part with his purchase for a small profit over what he gave?"

"Possibly he might, my dear sir," said the lawyer; "but I don't think it is very probable."

"May I ask why?" said Geoffrey.

"No, sir," said the solicitor, smiling. "Well, there, I will admit that. Because our client—another admission you see, sir—

I say because our client is a gentleman, who would not be tempted by a small profit. If you wish to buy, sir, you will have to give a handsome bonus for the purchase."

"How much?" said Geoffrey bluntly.

"Impossible to say, my dear sir," said the solicitor. "I do not even know that our client would sell. In fact I do not believe he would. His name? Oh no, I cannot give you his name."

Geoffrey had the name of the firm down in his pocket-book, and as he stepped out into noisy Fleet Street he felt that he could do no more. There was nothing left for him but to go back to Carnac and tell old Prawle of his ill success. Then, perhaps, the old man would say to what extent he would go, and the place might, probably, be obtained by private contract.

Geoffrey went to an hotel, had a few hours' rest and refreshment, and once more he was being hurried to the little mining town, where

he arrived this time without adventure, bitter with disappointment, and seeing endless advantages in the possession of the mine now that it was gone from him for ever. So enraged was he at the result of his journey that he could not bear to look at the mine as he walked towards Gwennas, but rigorously turned his eyes aside.

He had walked as far as the ruined pit when he started, for he heard his name pronounced, and, turning, there stood old Prawle, waiting to intercept him on his return.

"Now then," he said excitedly. "How much did you have to give, my lad? Quick! How much?"

"I have not bought the mine," said Geoffrey.

"What?" cried the old man furiously; and his weather-beaten countenance turned of a curious hue. "I told you to buy her, no matter what price."

"There was an accident to the train. The mine was sold before I got there."

"Sold!" cried the old man, with an oath. "Why didn't you walk on?"

"Two hundred miles in eight hours," said Geoffrey grimly.

"Why didn't you write or—or send?"

"I tried all; I thought of all; I spared no pains, Father Prawle," said Geoffrey, commiserating the old man's disappointment. "You could not have saved it had you gone yourself."

"But it was a fortune; it was a great fortune," cried the old man, stamping with rage.

"No, no," cried Geoffrey. "You might perhaps have made a little by it, or we might perhaps have hit upon some plan to get at the tin; but it was doubtful."

"You're a fool," cried the old man furiously.

"A terrible fool," said Geoffrey coolly.

"You don't know," stuttered old Prawle, who was beside himself with rage; "you don't know, I tell you. Not half-way down that pit I could show you veins of copper so rich that your tin you found was not worth half."

"What?" cried Geoffrey, staring at the old man to see if he were sane.

"She's full of copper, Trethick. Do you think I would have spent money unless I was sure? She's worth no end of money, and you've thrown away what would have been a great fortune for you as well as me."

"But the copper? Are you sure?" cried Geoffrey hoarsely.

"Am I sure?" cried the old man. "Didn't I work in her for years? Of course I know."

"Then why did you not say so before?" cried Geoffrey angrily.

"Why should I say so?" replied the old man fiercely. "I have myself to look after."

People don't come and give me money, and tell me to live out of that. They hate me, and call me ill names. No. I found the copper, and I said to myself, 'If no one else finds it, that's mine. I'll buy that mine some day;' and now, when the time has come, and we could have been rich, you let the mine go, and it is all for nothing."

"You ought to have told me about that copper, Prawle. It would have been the saving of Mr. Penwynn. I could have redeemed that mine from loss, and the water might have been removed sufficient for that."

"Nay," cried the old man; "you couldn't have rid her of water without my plan, and I tell you I found the copper, and it was mine, and you have thrown it away."

Geoffrey felt too much enraged to say much, but the old man went on.

"Helped Mr. Penwynn! I suppose you would: the man who threw you over.

Helped his girl, who threw you over, too, and who is going to marry John Tregenna some day."

A fierce utterance was on Geoffrey's lips, but this last remark of the old man seemed to silence him; and, prostrated by weariness and misery, he went on to the cottage, threw himself on his bed, and slept for twelve hours right away.

CHAPTER IX.


MADGE HEARS NEWS.

MADGE MULLION was very ill, and she seemed to Geoffrey to be going back, as he sat looking at her a few days after his return from town.

There was something about the poor girl he liked, for she was simple-hearted and loving to a degree, and he would often sit in the next room apparently busy writing, but watching her intensity of affection for her child.

"Come, Madge," he said to her, "why don't you grow strong again, and be a woman and fight the world?"

Her eyes filled with tears, and he cried out impatiently,—



"Now, look here, Madge, you are going to cry, and tell me how sorry you are for the pain you have caused me, and beg me to forgive you for what you have done; and if ever you say such a thing to me again, I shall run out of the house."

"No," she faltered, "I was not, Mr. Trethick. I was going to say why should I grow well and strong again?"

"For that!" he said abruptly, and he pointed to the sleeping child.

She glided from the sofa to the side of the cradle, and laid her face against the little cheek.

"And, look here," he said, "you are fretting yourself into the grave, Madge!"

"Yes, Mr. Trethick."

"You must be a woman, and get well. That little thing must be your reason; so make a brave fight for it."

Madge shook her head, and looked at him piteously.

"No," she said, "I feel that I have not strength now, and as if the greatest kindness I could do to you, Mr. Trethick, is to die."

"Nonsense!" he said kindly. "You have done me no harm—only brought me to my senses, and saved me from an ugly fate."

"Ah! Mr. Trethick," she cried, "what bitter words! You do not mean them."

"Oh, but I do, Madge," he said, laughing cynically. "Look here, my lass, I rather like you, and we are a pair of miserable unfortunates. I shall have to marry you, Madge, and force you to like and take care of your little one. Then we shall be able to go back to the cottage, and Mamma Mullion will bless us, and Uncle Paul will make us rich, and we shall all live happily afterwards, like the good people in the story-books."

"Ah! Mr. Trethick," she said softly, "do you think I cannot read your heart better than that? My trouble seems to have made me wiser than I was in my old

silly, girlish days. Why do you say such foolish, bitter things? They only give me pain, and I know you do not mean them."

"Oh," he said, laughing, "but I do."

"No, no, no," she said, sadly. "You love Rhoda Penwynn with all your heart, and always will, and I have come upon your love like some cruel blight."

"Curse Rhoda Penwynn!" he cried savagely. "I love the woman who is to be John Tregenna's wife?"

Madge started from her knees, and took two steps across the room to catch him by the arm.

"What? What is that you said?"

"That there is no such thing as true and honest love upon the face of this wretched earth," he cried. "It is a puzzle and a muddle. For a wretched error I am thrown over, and—"

"Speak what you said before," she said, wildly; "tell me what you said."

"I said that Rhoda Penwynn is about to marry John Tregenna, or John Tregenna is about to marry Rhoda Penwynn, which you like," he said, almost brutally.

"Is—this true?" she said hoarsely.

"Yes," he cried, with the veins standing out in his forehead, as, in spite of the calm, cynical way in which he had schooled himself to bear all this, the passion burning at his heart would have vent. "Honesty, integrity, and virtue are to have their reward; long-suffering patience is to win the day; so I say to you again, Madge, you and I had better wed."

"Go—go and leave me," said Madge, hoarsely. "Mr. Trethick—I want to be alone."

Her looks brought Geoffrey back to his senses, and the ebullition of passion was over.

"No: you are ill. Sit down there. Here, let me get you water—spirit—something,

Madge. My poor girl, I have given you terrible pain by my mad words."

"Mad words? Mr. Trethick," she cried, "were not those words true?"

He did not answer.

"They were true. I know they were; and yet she dared to come here and trample upon me in the midst of my wrongs."

"Who? Who came here?" cried Geoffrey.

"Rhoda Penwynn, and accused me cruelly. She to dare to speak to me as she did," cried Madge, whose face seemed quite transformed. "Half fainting as I was, I saw her take the child into her arms, and kiss and fondle it because it was his; and now she would step into my place. But, sooner than she shall be John Tregenna's wife, I'll stand between them at the altar, and—oh, God help me! what am I saying?—and I swore to him that I would die sooner than confess his shame."

She threw herself sobbing upon the floor.

"What have I said—what have I said?" she moaned.

"Only the simple truth that I was sure I knew," said Geoffrey, looking at her sadly. "Only words that it might have been kinder if you had spoken before."

"But I could not—I dared not. He made me swear. He said it would be his ruin, Mr. Trethick, and he promised that even if it was a year past, if I would be silent and help him, as soon as he had arranged his money matters I should be his wife; and I never said a word until now," sobbed the wretched girl.

"And it was your ruin and mine instead, Madge," said Geoffrey, coldly. "But there, my girl, I don't accuse you. I felt sure it was so, and I have only waited for the truth to come."

"And you will never forgive me," she cried piteously.

"Oh yes, if my forgiveness will do you

good, Madge, you have it freely. But there, I must go. I shall stifle if I stay here longer;" and, without another word, he went out and down amongst the rocks, seeming to take delight in trying to exhaust himself by hurrying over the most rugged parts to calm himself by physical exertion.

Over and over again he vowed that he would go and expose John Tregenna, but he always ended by vowing that he hated Rhoda Penwynn now, and that he would not stir a step even to meet her half-way.

It was past mid-day when he slowly climbed up once more to the cottage, and encountered Bessie at the door nursing the child.

"Well, Bessie," he said, "you look startled. What's the news?"

"Miss Mullion, Mr. Trethick!"

"Well, what of her? Not worse?"

"No, Mr. Trethick; she has put on her

things and gone out. I think she has gone up into the town."

"Madge Mullion! Gone up to the town!"

"Yes, sir, unless—unless—oh pray—pray, sir, go and see."

CHAPTER X.

JOHN TREGENNA'S VISITOR.

MR. CHYNOWETH was seated at his desk, with the heavy flap resting upon his head. The cards were dealt out in four packs, turned up so as to be beneath his eye, and it seemed as if some very particular hand was being played out; but Mr. Chynoweth's thoughts were wandering, and for quite half-an-hour he did not move a card.

"Curse him!" he said; and then there was another long pause, during which Mr. Chynoweth's thoughts still went on wandering.

"Hah!" he ejaculated at last; "he seems to hold all the trumps, and beats us at every

game. I don't know that I like the governor, but he has always been just to me, and paid me like a man, and trusted me. Yes, he has always trusted me, and I'm growing old in his service, and I can't bear to see things going to the dogs. Yes, he holds all the trumps somehow, and he'll win the rubber."

There was another pause, during which Mr. Chynoweth impatiently packed the cards, put them away, and shut down the heavy flap of his desk before taking up his slate, and sadly rubbing it with the piece of sponge attached by a string.

"Win the rubber, that's what he'll do. He's got the governor into a regular hole, and under his thumb, and it seems that he'll marry Miss Rhoda after all. Curse the mines! I wish he'd never touched them. An old fool! Hadn't he had experience enough of what comes to those who dabble in mines? It's wonderful! I shall be throwing my own

poor savings down next like poor Rumsey, and—talk of the—Morning, Rumsey.’

“Ah, Chynoweth !” said Dr. Rumsey, entering the office with his fishing-rod in his hand, and his creel hanging from his shoulder. “Nice morning.”

“Beautiful. How many trout ?”

“Not a brace,” said the doctor, drawing the basket round, and peering in at the hole disconsolately. “One miserable little fellow, that’s all. Chynoweth, I’m regularly out of luck.”

“Ah, yes,” said Chynoweth ; “you always do seem to hold bad hands.”

“Wretched,” said the doctor, with a grim smile ; “and the money comes in horribly.”

“Always does when you want it.”

“Always,” asserted the doctor, and there was another pause. “By the way, Chynoweth,” he said at last, as the clerk went on polishing his slate, “I hear that Wheal Carnac was sold in London the other day.”

“ Yes.”

“ Who bought it ? ”

“ Don’t know. We haven’t heard. Deposit’s paid, and all that sort of thing. That’s all we know at present.”

“ Do you—do you think that I could get fifty pounds lent me on those shares now ? ” said the doctor, hesitatingly.

Chynoweth shook his head.

“ But I paid down five hundred for them—my wife’s money.”

“ My dear Rumsey,” said Chynoweth, “ you couldn’t raise fifty shillings upon them.”

The doctor raised the lid of his basket now, and gazed in at the unfortunate trout.

“ It’s very hard,” he said, as if addressing the fish. “ My expenses are so large.”

“ Ten times mine,” said Chynoweth, “ I dessay.”

“ Do you—do you think Mr. Penwynn would make me an advance, Chynoweth ? I’ll deposit the shares with him.”

"Spades and aces, no!" cried Chynoweth. "The very name of Wheal Carnac would send him into a passion. I'll ask him to make you an advance, Rumsey—that I will," he continued, busily writing away upon his slate.

"Yes, do please."

"No," said Chynoweth, rubbing it all off again with the sponge. "It's of no use. He hasn't the money."

"Hasn't the money?"

"No; it's hard times with us now, Rumsey, I can tell you, and where it's all gone I can't tell."

"But I'm really in distress," said the doctor. "There are several bills I must pay. I can't put them off."

Chynoweth looked at him, then at the slate, hesitated, thought, wrote "I O U fifty pounds" upon it, and rubbed it out, and ended by laying it down.

"Are you very hard up, Rumsey?" he said.

"I never was so pushed before," said the doctor, dolefully. "Hang it, Chynoweth, I feel sometimes as if it is of no use to keep struggling on. It was bad enough before that scoundrel Trethick deluded me into buying those shares."

"I don't think Trethick is a scoundrel," said Chynoweth, quietly.

"You don't?"

"No; I believe he is as honest as the day."

"Indeed?" said the doctor, in what was meant as a sarcastic tone. "Nice honesty. Let alone my case, look at Madge Mullion."

"Ah, poor lass, he hasn't behaved very well to her. That's what I think. But look here, Rumsey, I've won a few pounds of you in my time."

"Have you? Well yes, I suppose you have, Chynoweth. You always seemed to make more of a study of whist than I did."

"Eh? Yes. Think so?" said Chyno-

weth, glancing at his desk-lid to see that it was close. "But look here, Rumsey, it's of no use to ask the governor for money now."

"But I must. What am I to do?"

"Well, look here, I'll lend you fifty pounds."

"You—you, Chynoweth?"

"Yes," said the little man, quietly; and, without noticing the excited, overcome look of his visitor, he methodically wrote out an I O U, and placed it before him to sign.

"This—this is more than I expected of you, Chynoweth," said the doctor, huskily.

"Well, do you know, Rumsey, it's more than I expected of myself. But there you are," he continued, taking notes to the amount from his pocket-book, "and pay me back a little at the time."

"If I live I will," said the doctor; and, hastily catching up the money, he hurried away to conceal his emotion.

"Poor old Rumsey!" muttered Chyno-

weth. "He's a good fellow and some of these days, I dessay, I shall have to be in his hands. Oh, you're here again, are you?"

"Mr. Penwynn in his room, Chynoweth?" said Tregenna, entering unceremoniously, and going towards the door of the banker's sanctum.

"No, sir; not come yet," said the clerk, rising.

"All right, I'll wait. I want to write a letter or two."

"He walked in and shut the door, while Chynoweth resumed his place.

"Nice state of affairs," he muttered. "Who's master here now?"

John Tregenna evidently, for he made no scruple about taking Mr. Penwynn's seat at his table, and writing letter after letter, ringing twice for Chynoweth to answer some question, and then going on with his work, over which he had been very intent for quite an hour, when there was a tap at the door.

"Come in. Well, Chynoweth, Mr. Penwynn arrived?"

"No, sir. Here's a lady, sir, wants to see you. She says she has been up to your house, and they said you were here."

"A lady? Is it Miss Penwynn?"

"No," said a voice which made Tregenna sink back in his chair; "it is not Miss Penwynn;" and Madge Mullion, closely veiled, and looking tall in the thick cloak she wore, walked straight into the room.

Chynoweth hesitated for a moment, and then softly withdrew, nodding his head.

"So the devil is going to get his due, eh?" he said to himself. "I'd give something if I could go down to listening at key-holes, but I can't do it—I can't do it—I can't do it!" and he went back to his desk.

"You here, Miss Mullion?" exclaimed Tregenna, making an effort to recover his composure.

"Yes, I am here," she said, very sternly;

and Tregenna noticed that it seemed to be no longer the weak, vain, flattery-loving girl who was speaking, but a woman made worldly and strong by trouble.

“And what can I do for you, Miss Mullion?” he said coolly. “Will you take a seat?”

She stood gazing at him without speaking—without moving, while his dark, handsome face grew calmer and more composed.

“I came—to ask you—a question,” she said at last, in measured tones; and, as she spoke, she pressed one hand upon her breast, as if to aid her in speaking coolly.

“Certainly,” he said politely; “but this is not my office, Miss Mullion, and I have no right to transact legal business here.”

As he spoke he took a sheet of foolscap paper, and a fresh dip of ink, as if to make notes of her business.

“I came to ask you, John Tregenna,” she said at last, in answer to his inquiring look,

“whether the report that I have heard is true.”

“Report? True?” he said. “Really, Miss Mullion—”

“I have heard,” she continued, speaking in a slow, painful way, every word sounding harsh and metallic, while her face was fixed and stony in its immobility—“I have heard a report that you are—to be married—to Rhoda Penwynn.”

“Well, really, Miss Mullion,” he said, smiling, “this is a strange question;” and he looked at her with an amused, perfectly unruffled expression.

“Is it true?” she said, in a louder voice, which Tregenna knew must reach the outer office.

“Well, really—it is somewhat strange that you should come and ask me such a question, Miss Mullion; but, since you have asked it—yes, I am.”

Madge raised her veil as he made the avowal,

but it seemed to give her no shock ; there was no trace of emotion in her face, as she gazed straight in his eyes.

“ And what of me ? ” she said at last.

“ I beg your pardon ? ”

“ What of your child ? ” she said, in the same harsh, ringing voice.

“ Really, Miss Mullion, my poor girl,” he said, rising, “ I fear you are ill.”

“ Ill ! ” she said sharply ; “ very ill, but not so ill but that I can come to you now and ask for reparation for my wrongs.”

“ Ask me, Miss Mullion ? Poor soul ! ” he muttered ; “ she takes me for Trethick.”

Madge heard his words, and if any spark of love or passion remained for him in her breast, those words crushed it out. The weak girl had indeed become a woman now—a woman and a mother ; and if John Tregenna, in a fit of remorse, had asked her then to be his wife, she would have refused, and gone on bearing the burthen of her shame.

"You pitiful, contemptible snake!" she said, speaking now in a low voice that thrilled him through and through. "I am mad, am I, John Tregenna? No, not now. I was mad to listen to and trust you—mad to believe that you would keep your word—mad, if you will, to take upon my poor weak shoulders the sin that was yours more than mine."

"Miss Mullion!" exclaimed Tregenna, rising. "I must put an end to this painful interview;" and he laid his hand upon the bell.

"Do you wish Mr. Chynoweth to hear what I am saying to you—what I intend to say to Rhoda Penwynn to-night when she returns from Truro—what I should have said to her to-day, after I had left you, had she been at home? If so, ring."

Tregenna showed the first sign of weakness; his hand dropped from the bell, and he started as he heard poor Madge's bitter laugh,

realizing more fully now than ever that the enemy in his path, instead of being a weak, helpless girl, had grown into a dangerous woman.

He had made a false step in his defence ; but it was too late to retreat, and he kept boldly on.

“ My poor girl,” he said kindly, “ it would be affectation to pretend that I did not know your troubles, but pray be calm. Let me send some one with you home.”

“ You pitiful coward ! ” she said again, and there was an intensity of scorn in her words that thrilled him through ; “ do you think if I had known you as I know you now that I would have kept your wretched secret ? ”

“ Miss Mullion—”

“ Have let insult, misery, and injury fall upon others' heads, till I have been heart-broken over their sorrows, and yet in faith to you I would not speak. But it is over now. Mr. Trethick knows the truth.

To-night Rhoda Penwynn will know the truth. I came to you now more in sorrow than anger, believing that when you saw me, even if the report was true, that the sight of my poor thin face, and what you could read there of my sufferings, would move you to some show of pity for your miserable victim ; but instead—Oh, God of heaven ! ” she exclaimed passionately, “ how could I ever love this man ? ”

“ Is anything the matter, sir ? ” said Mr. Chynoweth, opening the door. “ Did you call ? ”

“ No. Yes, Mr. Chynoweth,” exclaimed Tregenna, excitedly. “ This poor girl. She ought not to be away from home alone. I don’t think—” (he touched his forehead).

“ That I am in my senses, Mr. Chynoweth,” said Madge, sharply, as she drew down her veil ; “ but I am. John Tregenna, I shall keep my word.”

She went slowly out of the inner room and

across the office, Chynoweth hastening after her to open the door, John Tregenna coming close behind, as if to see that Madge did not speak again ; but she went away without a word.

“Poor creature !” exclaimed Tregenna. “I suppose I must not heed a word she said. Of course you did not hear, Mr. Chynoweth ?”

“No, sir, not a word hardly ; only when she spoke very loud.”

“Ah, poor thing, her brain is touched, no doubt,” he said, as he returned to the inner room, where his countenance seemed to change in a way that, had she seen it, would have made Madge Mullion shrink from him in dread, and, perhaps, hesitate in her intention to go up and see Rhoda Penwynn some time that night.

CHAPTER XI.

BY THE SOLEMN SHORE.

GEOFFREY 'started off along the cliff with a strange feeling of dread in his breast, and as he hurried along it was with his eyes gazing down upon the shore, so that he passed without seeing that some one was seated on one of the blocks of stone by the old mine shaft, enjoying the sunshine and gazing apparently sadly out to sea.

He noted the two descending paths that were connected in his mind with poor Madge's attempt to commit self-destruction, and hesitated as to whether he should descend; but he decided upon going on straight, first, to the town, and as he strode on he could not

help sighing as he glanced at the buildings about Wheal Carnac.

"I wonder who bought it," he said; and for a moment or two he mused upon old Prawle's sulky indifference now that his *coup* had failed, and wondered whether it would be of any use to try for a post with the new proprietors.

"A nice character mine to go with," he muttered. "Poor Madge! Where can she be? Has she gone up to Tregenna?"

The more he thought of this the stronger the idea became, and with a curious feeling of hope, that he vainly tried to crush down, rising in his breast, he went quickly on, to utter an ejaculation the next moment, for there was Madge walking towards him along the cliff.

"Why, Madge!" he exclaimed. "You quite frightened me. Where have you been?"

"Don't touch me—don't speak to me,

Mr. Trethick," she said, in a sharp, harsh voice.

"But I shall speak to you, and I shall touch you," said Geoffrey, with a quiet firmness. "There, let your arm rest there. Hang on to me as much as you like: you are weak and excited, and ready to faint. There, let's walk steadily back. Don't hurry. Take off your veil, and let the sea-breeze blow upon your face; it will revive you."

"Oh—oh—oh!" came softly as a whisper from beneath that veil, as Geoffrey's words seemed to change the spirit that was burning in the poor girl's breast; and, weakly and helplessly enough now, she hung upon his arm, and suffered him to lead her onward towards the Cove.

At the end of a few hundred yards they drew near the opening in the huge cliff where the ruined engine-house and mining shaft were, and here they came suddenly upon old Mr. Paul, sitting upon a block of

stone, with his hands resting upon the head of his great cane.

The old man looked more himself, and there was a grim air of satisfaction in his face as he saw the couple approaching.

Geoffrey felt his companion give a spasmodic start, and she stopped short as if her legs had failed her, uttering at the same moment a low moan, as she saw her uncle rise from his seat and come towards them, looking first at one and then at the other. Then he just nodded his head at them gravely, and walked on in the opposite direction.

Geoffrey gave an impatient stamp with his foot as he turned and saw the old man disappear.

"Poor old boy!" he said. "There's something about him I like, Madge, and I'm bursting with eloquence now—full of things I want to say to him, but hang me if I could speak when he was here."

“Take me home,” said Madge, softly; “I mean to the Cove.”

Geoffrey saw that she was weak and half fainting, so he hurried her along as fast as she could bear the effort until he had reached the descent to the cottage, where he had to lift her in his arms and carry her down the rest of the way.

In the afternoon, though, she revived rapidly, and Geoffrey noticed that she seemed none the worse for her unwonted effort, but rather, on the contrary, better and more energetic than she had been for months. He, however, bade Bessie to watch over her, and above all things not to let her go out again.

But Geoffrey's thoughts were sent into a new channel in the course of the afternoon by a visit from Amos Pengelly, who came to him as he was walking up and down upon the cliff, thinking now of Rhoda, and whether the time had not come for him to leave Carnac; now of the mine, and whether, as a man, it

was not his duty to try and find the new purchaser, and make known his knowledge.

"I might get a good post upon the strength of what I know," he said to himself; "and that would be just like me—to climb up and succeed upon another man's misfortunes. No: I'll keep to my old way. The ship may drift: she cannot come to worse wreck than she is in now. Hallo, Pengelly."

"How do, Master Trethick, sir?" said Amos; "I've brought you this."

"This?" said Geoffrey, taking a letter from the miner's hand, and turning it over to find that it was on old-fashioned paper, doubled in the old style, and sealed with a great patch of wax and a crest.

"Why, it's from old Mr. Paul," he said, as he glanced at the crabbed characters.

"Yes, sir; he asked me to bring it down and wait."

Geoffrey opened the missive, and found it very short, but he read in it the effect that

that day's meeting had had upon the old man. It was as follows :—

“ Dear Sir,—Will you come up and see me this evening ? I want to ask a favour of you once more. What I have seen to-day makes me hope that you can now meet me in a better spirit.

“ Yours faithfully,

“ THOMAS PAUL.

“ P.S. If you are in the spirit that I hope you feel, bring poor Madge.

“ Geoffrey Trethick, Esq.’”

“ Geoffrey Trethick, Esquire ! Ha, ha, ha ! Poor old fellow ! Esquire ! A broken-down mining adventurer in a smuggler's cottage. No, Master Paul, I am not in the spirit you mean, and it is of no use for us to meet and quarrel again.

“ Will you write an answer, sir ? ” said Pengelly, after watching Trethick for some minutes, as he read and re-read the letter,

and then walked up and down talking to himself.

"Yes—no—yes—no. Wait a few moments, Pengelly. I have not yet made up my mind. Tell him—tell Mr. Paul—yes, tell him that I will come up and see him this evening. I will not write."

Pengelly nodded, and moved towards the cottage to get a sight of Bessie.

"Have you heard, sir, who has bought the mine?" he asked.

"No, Pengelly. I have been trying, but they keep it very quiet. You have heard nothing, I suppose?"

"Not a word, sir," said Pengelly, with a sigh; and he went on into the cottage.

"Papa-in-law elect does not seem to give him so much of his confidence as he does me. However, just as he likes. Now what am I to say to the old man?"

He walked up and down thinking for a few minutes, and then decided that the time

had come for him to speak out frankly all that he knew, and to refer them to Madge for the rest.

“Poor lass! I’ll speak up well for her sufferings. She has done wrong, but look at her. Poor lass! How a man can be such a scoundrel, and leave a poor weak girl to fight out her difficulties alone is more than I can understand; and what nature is about to allow it. Here’s poor Madge dying of consumption, and scouted as an outcast for her wrong, and the scoundrel who shared her sin—bah, no! who made her sin—is in high feather, and about to be rewarded for his goodness with a beautiful and loving wife—

“Oh!” he ejaculated, grinding his teeth; “if I think about it, I shall go mad;” and he set off down to the rough shore, where, in a reckless way, he set about wrenching over great blocks of the granite, telling himself he was looking for curious sea anemones and star-fish, when it was to weary himself out

by his tremendous exertion, and dull the aching misery of his thoughts.

It was quite evening when he returned to the cottage, and sat and chatted with poor Mrs. Prawle for a time, before following the old wrecker down to his den below the cliff, and stopping with him to smoke a pipe.

The old fellow was more sociable than usual, and chatted about the mine and the chance they had lost, but in quite a friendly spirit.

“It wur a bad job, my lad, but I’m not so sore now. I’ve got enough for me, I daresay, but I’d liked to have seen ye doing a bit better.”

“Oh, I daresay my time will come, Master Prawle,” said Geoffrey, lightly. “But I must go now.”

“Go? Where are you going? It’s a gashly dark night.”

“Only as far as old Mr. Paul’s. Madge’s uncle wants to see me.”

"Oh, ay," said the old fellow, nodding.
"Well, my lad, I hope good will come of it.
Don't keep too stiff an upper lip."

Geoffrey looked at him sharply, and was about to speak, but he checked himself and started off.

"Why, where are you going?" said the old man.

"Down along by the shore," replied Geoffrey.

"You'll find it rough work."

"So much the better. Tame me down, so that I shan't fly out if I have such things said to me as you have just indulged in."

As he said this he went on down to the rough granite-strewn shore, and began to thread his way amongst the blocks towards Carnac; but at the end of half an hour, it had grown so much darker, the effort was so great, and the difficulty of getting along had become so much more apparent, that he gave up, and made his way towards the cliff, so as

to reach the road at last by the pathway on the Carnac side of the old adit, faint and completely overcome by his exertions by the time he reached the familiar path down which he had run to save poor Madge.

If Geoffrey had stopped at the cottage he would have seen that instead of quietly taking to her work, Madge was dressing herself to go out. This she seemed to be doing secretly, listening from time to time to make out whether Bessie was noting her actions, which plainly indicated an attempt to steal away unseen.

She was deadly pale, and evidently greatly agitated, but she dressed herself with much care, bestowing unwonted pains upon her hair; and at last, quite ready, she stood there listening and waiting for her opportunity.

This did not come for some little time, but at last Bessie was busy helping her mother to bed, and the baby was lying there fast asleep in its cradle.

There was no one to see her now, and, gliding out, Madge softly raised the latch of the door, and left it ajar, before returning to the cradle, throwing herself upon her knees, and clasping her little one to her throbbing heart.

“My darling !” she moaned.

But Geoffrey saw nothing of this, or he might have compelled her to stay, and not tempt the danger of a walk along the cliff path on such a night. He was, however, playing no watcher’s part, and there was no one to see the hurried figure that almost ran out of the cottage at Gwennas Cove, with a long cloak huddled round it, so as to cover the sleeping babe as well.

The night had grown darker, but the pathway was perfectly familiar to her, as it had been from childhood ; and, thinking more of her mission than of the child she held so carefully wrapped, she hurried on, gazing straight before her, so as to avoid slip or fall over some awkward mass of rock.

So deeply intent was the girl upon her mission that she did not see the figure of a man standing against the cliff face, just by the opening by the ruined mine; and, as she reached the spot, she was so taken by surprise that the cry that rose to her lips was checked on the instant by a fold of her own cloak.

It was a matter of moments. There was a feeble struggle, a hoarse, smothered cry, a violent thrust, and in the darkness the cloaked figure was seen to stagger back—totter—and then her assailant seemed to throw himself upon his knees, and rest there, panting and listening, till from far below there came up a hollow, reverberating plash as of some heavy body falling into the depths of the deserted mine. Then twice over there was a hoarse cry, and then a curious sound of splashing which rose in a horribly distinct fashion upon the black night air.

Then all was still.

CHAPTER XII.

JOHN TREGENNA'S TRIUMPH.

THE man rose softly then from his hands and knees, rubbing the former to get rid of the dirt that might be clinging there, and then taking out a white handkerchief to brush his knees—a needless operation, for the turf was short and dry, and left no marks.

Then, panting heavily, though his exertions had been slight, he stood listening again, not daring to go nearer to the edge of the shaft.

All was perfectly quiet, and, with a sigh of relief, he crept back to the pathway and listened.

All was still here too, but he could not flee yet without going back and searching

about to see if there was anything dropped—handkerchief, cloak, or the like.

But no ; all was apparently as it should be, and he could find no trace ; so once more going cautiously to the footpath, he listened, and, all being still, he walked swiftly in the direction of Carnac, till, reaching the path down to the shore, he turned down it quickly, and came in contact with Geoffrey Trethick.

“Hallo !” exclaimed the latter, sharply, “do you want to knock a man off the cliff ? Oh, it’s you, Mr. Tregenna !”

Tregenna did not answer, but, trembling in every limb, pressed on to reach the shore ; but before he had gone many yards a malicious spirit seemed to tempt Geoffrey, and he called after the retreating figure,—

“If you are going to see Miss Mullion, Mr. Tregenna, you will find the upper path the better.”

“D—— !” muttered Tregenna, as he

almost staggered now down the cliff; "what cursed fate sent him here to-night?"

He was so completely unnerved by the encounter, that he paused for a few minutes to try and recover himself.

"If I could—if I could," he muttered; "but he is too strong. My God! what shall I do?"

The horror of discovery was so great that for a time he could not proceed, and in imagination he saw the body of his victim brought to the surface, and Geoffrey Trethick bearing witness of having seen him near the spot.

By degrees, though, he grew calmer, as he felt there was very little chance of poor Madge's body ever being found, the old shaft being many hundred feet deep. Besides, there was nothing to make people think she had been thrown down there. Even if she were found, was it not far more probable that she had committed suicide, especially as she had attempted it once before?

"I'll not go," he muttered. "Better to face it out. Bah! there is nothing to face."


He stopped and lit a cigar, the necessity for concealment having gone. Geoffrey had spoiled that portion of his plan, namely, to reach the other side of the town unseen. On the contrary, he felt now disposed to court observation, and walked on smoking along the rugged shore to the slope by the harbour, up which he passed, exchanging greetings with Tom Jennen and one or two men who were leaning over the rail that protected the edge of the cliff.

"It's gashly dark night, sir. Bad walking down there, baint it?"

"Well, yes, it is rough," said Tregenna, "but it does for a change."

"Hah!" he ejaculated, taking a long breath, as he walked slowly up towards An Morlock; "it is hard work, but I daresay I can manage to keep cool."

But he could not, for once more a sensa-



tion as of panic seized upon him, and something seemed to urge him to fly for his life before it was too late. For he recalled Madge's visit to him, and Chynoweth's knowledge of that visit, and what she had said.

On all sides black threatening shadows of impending danger seemed to rise about him, and it was only by a savage wrench that he tore himself from the spot, and went on to his own house, where he washed, and carefully brushed his clothes, after taking a goodly glass of brandy.

This last gave him the nerve he had lost, and, feeling calmer, he went out once more into the cool night air.

Here he lit a fresh cigar, and at last, perfectly calm and unruffled, he went up the drive to the great house, gazing about him with a satisfied air, as if he claimed the place now as his own, and, nodding to the servant who admitted him, he took off hat and


gloves, crossed the handsome hall, and stepped into the well-lit drawing-room.

Rhoda was speaking angrily as the door closed behind him, and she did not hear his entry. It was evidently her final remark after much that had gone before, and John Tregenna stood there paralyzed, as the words fell from her lips.

"I'll not believe it," she cried. "Mr. Trethick must have sent you here. What proof have you that Mr. Tregenna is the wicked man you say?"

"His own looks," said Madge, as she stood there with flashing eyes and ashy face, seeming to the wretched man like some avenging spirit pointing at him with white and quivering hand. "Ask him, if you will, though you can read the truth there. Now, Miss Penwynn, can you marry such a man as this?"

Rhoda made no answer, for John Tregenna's brain had reeled. He had made



two or three attempts to master his craven dread, but in vain. Not an hour ago he had cast, as he believed, Madge Mullion down that hideous chasm in the earth, had heard her dying shrieks; and then, gloating over his release from one who would have blasted all his plans, he had come straight on to An Morlock, to find her standing pointing at him with denouncing finger, and telling Rhoda Penwynn of his guilt.

He had striven, fought like a drowning man, but in vain; and, after clutching at a table to save himself, he fell with a heavy crash upon the floor.

CHAPTER XIII.

SISTERS IN THE FLESH.

MADGE kissed her child passionately again and again before replacing it in the cradle. Then she rose to steal to the door, but she could not go without running back to her helpless infant, which seemed somehow that night to draw her to its side.

It was as if she felt a presentiment that she was bidding it good-bye for ever, and, taking it to her breast once more, she rocked herself to and fro, sobbing over it silently, as she listened to the voices in the next room.

“He told Bessie not to let me go out again, I’m sure,” she thought to herself; and,

feeling that if she meant to go she must go at once, she unwillingly laid down the child after a passionate embrace, and went softly out into the dark night.

She was very weak, and panted with the exertion as she reached the top of the ascent, but here she felt the sea-breeze, and, glancing round for a few moments as she tried to regain her breath, she noted one or two things that pointed to the coming of a storm before many hours had passed. The lights on the point across the bay loomed up so that they were plainly to be seen, and her sea-side life made her read tokens of the tempest in the direction and sound of the wind.

She set off with the intention of going straight along the cliff path to the town, and then up to An Morlock, where she would see and tell Rhoda Penwynn all; but she had not gone far before a horrible feeling of dread began to oppress her. She recalled

Tregenna's looks when he had heard her threat, and she felt now as certain as if she saw him before her that he would try and stop her.

“ And if he does meet me ? ”

She stopped, shivering. Her blood seemed to run cold, and a nameless horror crept over her as she thought of what might be the consequences.

The chill of horror increased, for she dreaded that he would kill her, and now she felt that she would like to live.

Geoffrey Trethick had told her that she should live for the sake of her little one, and for its sake she would forget the world and its bitter ways. She had something indeed to live for now, and she blessed Geoffrey in her heart for awakening her to that fact.

Inspired by this idea, then, she went on cautiously, and with a step as light as that of some bird ; but she saw nothing to cause her fear, and began to think that the darkness would

befriend her, and hide her from the sight of any watcher who would stop her on her way.

She had already passed the rough path down to the shore, the one up which Geoffrey Trethick had carried her on that terrible night, at the recollection of which she shuddered, and still there was no sign of danger; when suddenly she stopped short, for ahead of her in the darkness there came, plainly heard, the impatient hiss that one might make by a hasty drawing in of the breath.

She knew the sound. She had heard it more than once, when he had been waiting for her down by Wheal Carnac when it was in ruins, and now he was waiting for her again by this ruined pit—for what?

For a moment her heart beat wildly, and her imagination told her that, perhaps, after all, he had come in love to ask her forgiveness, and to take her once more to his breast.

Then the tumultuous beating gradually

grew calmer and then nearly stopped, as a chill of horror seized upon her. It was not in love that he had come, but in hate; and trembling, and with her brow wet with terror, she crept softly back, reached the path, and descended its dangerous steep to the shore, crept cautiously along and by the mouth of the old adit, hardly daring to pass it, lest the sound of her step should go up to where Tregenna was watching for her a couple of hundred yards away, and ended by reaching the other path down which she had frantically run to cast herself into the sea, glided softly up it, reaching the regular cliff way again; and then, but always with the dread upon her that Tregenna was in pursuit, she hurried onwards towards Carnac church-town.

The poor girl shivered as she passed the lane leading up to the cottage, and there was a longing, yearning look in her eyes as she turned them in that direction; but she

kept steadily on till she reached the gate at An Morlock, where, after a little hesitation on the part of the servant, she was admitted, and at length shown into the drawing-room, where Rhoda stood, cold and stern, silently regarding her, and with her eyes seeming to do all the questioning part.

For a time they stood gazing at each other, till Rhoda, from her proud position of vantage, began to feel that there was strength in the standing-place of her erring sister—the strength that comes from being hedged round by weakness; and, after a few minutes' silence, there was that in Madge's large eyes and pallid face that quite disarmed her. The stern, harsh manner passed away, and she placed a chair for her visitor.

“Will you sit down?” she said softly.

Those few gently-uttered words affected Madge strangely. She took a couple of steps forward, and then in an instant she was at Rhoda's feet clinging to the skirt of

her dress, and sobbing as if her heart would break. So violent was her agitation that Rhoda grew at length alarmed, and had serious thoughts of summoning assistance; but, on trying to move to the bell, she found Madge clinging to her tightly.

"No, no," sobbed Madge, "don't leave me—don't go away till you have heard all, and tried to forgive me. Oh, Miss Penwynn, why do you hate me? Why do you think such evil of me as you do?"

"I think evil of you?" said Rhoda, with a touch of scorn in her voice that she could not repress. "Madge Mullion, you had passed out of my thoughts."

"It is false," cried Madge, looking up sharply. "You think of me every day, and hate me because you think I came between you and your lover."

"Have you come here to insult me—to tell me this?" cried Rhoda, trying to release her skirt.

"To tell you, not to insult you," said Madge, clinging the more tightly as she felt Rhoda's efforts to get free. "It is I who ought to reproach you, who are blind and mistaken; it is you who have come between me and mine."

"Will you loose my dress?" panted Rhoda, growing excited now; "will you leave me?"

"Not till I have told you all," cried Madge. "Miss Penwynn, I don't think I have long to live. I could not tell you a lie."

"It was mad and foolish to let you be admitted," cried Rhoda angrily. "You wicked girl, I thought you had come to me for help, and I would not send you empty away, but you insult me for my forbearance."

"No," said Madge, hoarsely. "I came to help you, not to ask for help. I feel free to speak now, and I tell you, Rhoda Penwynn,

that you have cast away the truest man who ever saw the light."

"You wicked girl! Go: leave me," panted Rhoda. "I will not listen;" but she struggled less hard.

"You shall listen for his sake, if I die in saying it," panted Madge, as she twisted the stout silk more tightly in her hands. "Mr. Trethick never said word of love to me. He never looked even lovingly in my eyes, though, in my pique, I tried to make him, for he loved you too well."

"It is false—he sends you here to insult me," panted Rhoda, "and to plead for him. I will have you turned from the house."

"It is true," cried Madge; "and you turn from this true, honest gentleman, whose clear, transparent heart you might read at a glance."

"This is unbearable," cried Rhoda, bending down and catching at Madge's hands, to try and tear them from her dress.

"You may beat me and fight as hard as you like," cried Madge. "I am weak and helpless; but I can cling to you till you have heard, and you shall hear all."

"I will not—I cannot hear it; it is too late," cried Rhoda, ceasing to drag at Madge's hands, and once more trying to leave the room.

But, though she struggled hard, she found that she only drew Madge over upon her face, and that the poor creature clung to her more tightly than ever.

"It is too late; I cannot—I will not hear you;" and she stood with her fingers thrust into her ears.

Madge turned her face up to her sidewise, and a sad smile trembled about her thin, pale lips as she said softly,—

"You must hear me—you cannot help hearing me; and it is not too late. I tell you that you threw aside that true-hearted gentleman, who is all that is manly and good, and

now you have stepped into my place, to take to your heart my betrayer, the father of my poor, helpless babe."

Rhoda's hands dropped to her sides. She had heard every word, and, unable to resist the desire to know more, she went down upon her knees, caught Madge by the shoulders and gazed fiercely in her eyes.

"This is not true," she cried. "Wicked, false woman, you have come to blacken Mr. Tregenna's character to me."

"Blacken his character!" cried Madge, half scornfully. "You have lived here all your life and know all that I knew before I weakly listened to his lying words, thinking that I was so different from others who had gone before. Tell me, Rhoda Penwynn, would what I say make his character much blacker than it is?"

Rhoda groaned, and her hands left Madge's shoulders to clasp each other, while she raised herself once more erect, to stand with her

broad forehead knotted and wrinkled by her thoughts.

“And yet you listen to him—you consent to be his wife,” continued Madge. “Oh, Miss Penwynn, if not for my sake, for your own, don’t let me leave you to-night feeling that my journey has been in vain.”

“It is not true,” cried Rhoda, rousing herself once more, and speaking with stubborn determination not to believe the words she heard, and fighting hard against her heart, which was appealing so hard for the man she really loved. “Get up. Leave this house.”

Madge stood up now angrily, and faced her.

“Yes,” she said, “I’ll go, but you have heard the truth ; and I’ll come between you at the church, and claim him, for he swore that I, and I only, should be his wife.”

“I’ll not believe it,” cried Rhoda, passionately. “Oh, would to God I could !” she moaned.

"You do believe it," continued Madge.

"No, no; I'll not believe it," cried Rhoda.

"Mr. Trethick must have sent you here."

The next minute she was gazing down at John Tregenna's ghastly face, as he lay where he had fallen, while Madge was looking at him cold, stern, and unmoved.

"Do you believe me now?" said Madge.

Rhoda did not answer, but stared in a horrified way from one to the other, as Mr. Penwynn and a couple of the servants came hurrying in; and when they had succeeded in reviving the fallen man, Madge had quietly left the house.

"Let me go home," said Tregenna, hoarsely, as his eyes wandered round the room in a curiously wild manner. Mr. Penwynn spoke to him, but he only shuddered and shook his head, repeating his request so earnestly that he was assisted home, and Dr. Rumsey passed the rest of the night by his side.

CHAPTER XIV.

GEOFFREY'S BOAST.

"WELL, Mr. Paul," said Geoffrey, speaking in his bluff, frank way; "I said I would never come back to this house till you sent for me, and I have kept my word."

"Yes, yes," cried the old man, shaking his hand warmly. "I have sent for you—God bless you, boy. I am glad to see you here again."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Geoffrey, for poor Mrs. Mullion had thrown her arms round his neck, kissed him, and laid her head upon his shoulder, sobbing as if her heart would break. "Mrs. Mullion," he continued, putting his arm round her and patting her

shoulder, "come, come, come, be a woman, and let's talk and see if we can't put this unhappy affair all right."

"Yes, yes," she sobbed, raising her face and clinging to him still; "I always liked you, Geoffrey Trethick, and you will—you will try. You have been so good to my poor darling in other ways. We have known everything, though we have kept away. Mr. Paul here said it would be a lesson for you both, but I've gone down on my knees every night, Geoffrey, and prayed for you both, and that your heart might be softened; and now, my boy, have pity on her poor mother, who prays to you for justice to her weak, erring child—who prays to you on her bended knees."

"No, no, no, my poor soul," said Geoffrey, kindly, as he held her up. "There, there, don't kneel to me. Come, sit down," he cried, kissing her pleasant, motherly face; and the tears stood in his eyes as he spoke. "Come,

Uncle Paul, let us try if we cannot see daylight out through this miserable fog."

"Yes, yes," said the old man, who was standing with his head bent. "Yes, yes," he continued, heartily; "sit down—sit down, my boy. We will have no more passion. It shall all be calm and quiet. Come, Geoffrey, you'll smoke one of the old cheroots with me again?"

He smiled in the young man's face as he took out his case.

"Indeed, I will," cried Geoffrey, catching the old man's hand and retaining it. "Why, Uncle Paul—old fellow, this is like the good old times."

They sat there hand clasped in hand for some moments, and then the elder shook Geoffrey's softly and let it go.

"Come," he said, "light up. I want to talk to you."

"Yes, let us light up," said Geoffrey. "Mrs. Mullion, may we smoke before you? I don't want you to go away."

"Oh, no, I will not go," said the poor woman, tenderly, as she hastened to hand them each a light.

Then they smoked for a few minutes in silence, Mrs. Mullion at a sign from the old man bringing out his handsome silver spirit-stand and glasses, with hot water and sugar.

"Come, Geoffrey, my boy," cried Uncle Paul; "mix for yourself, and let's drink to the happy future."

"Yes," said Geoffrey, "we will; but, Uncle Paul, Mrs. Mullion, let me say a few words first. I had a father who gave me all my early education—all that was not given by my tender, gentle mother. My father in his lessons to me taught me what his true, sterling character had been through life. 'Jeff, my boy,' he has said to me a thousand times, 'when once you have put your hand to a task, keep to it till you have mastered it.'"

"Yes, yes, you learned your lesson well," said the old man, nodding his head approvingly,

for Geoffrey had laid his cigar on the edge of the table, where it burned slowly beneath its pearly ash, and had paused, as if waiting for him to speak.

"Another thing my father said, too, as many times perhaps, Mr. Paul, was this: 'Come rich, Jeff, come poor, strive to be a gentleman through life, and never let it be said of you that you told a lie.' "

"Good, yes—good advice, Geoffrey Trethick," said the old man, smiling. "If I had had a son, I would have said the same."

"Then, look here, Mr. Paul," cried Geoffrey, excitedly, as he rose up and towered in his manly strength above the little, old yellow nabob. "I tell you this: I never knowingly yet told a lie, and, God helping me, I never will!"

There was a strange silence in that room as the young man's distinct, loud voice ceased for a few moments, and mother and uncle sat eagerly waiting for his next utterances.

"Now that I have said that," continued Geoffrey, "let me look you both in the face, and tell you that you have done me a cruel wrong."

"A cruel wrong?" began the old man, hotly.

"Yes," continued Geoffrey, "a cruel wrong. Poor Madge has spoken out at last, and so will I."

"This is a cruel—"

"Wrong, Mr. Paul," said Geoffrey, smiling, and laying his hand upon the old man's shoulder. "Uncle Paul, I like you—I always have liked you; but you were unjust to me when you asked me to bear John Tregenna's sin."

The old man started back from him, his neck over the back of his chair, his withered throat stretched, and his lips parted, as he stared up in Geoffrey's face. Then, as the whole truth seemed to come home to him, he caught at Geoffrey's hand, and, trembling,

and in broken accents, began to plead for pardon.

"My poor boy—my brave boy—my poor boy!" was all, though, that he could stammer; and, in his abject misery, he tried to struggle from his chair upon his knees: but, as soon as Geoffrey realized the truth, he smilingly held the old man in his place.

"No, no, Uncle Paul," he said. "Stand up, old fellow, and give me your hand, like the true, chivalrous old gentleman you are, and let us understand each other once and for all. Come, you forgive me now?"

"Forgive you?" faltered the old man. "My boy, can you forgive me?"

"Your hand too, Mrs. Mullion. Do you doubt my word?"

"Oh, no, no!" sobbed the poor woman, sadly, for matters had not turned out as she wished, and her tears were falling fast, when Geoffrey exclaimed sharply, and held out his hand,—

“There is some one listening! Quick; there is something wrong.”

He ran to the door, and as he flung it open there was a hasty step upon the gravel, and then a heavy fall.

The next moment he was raising the insensible form of poor Madge from the path, for she had been unable to resist the temptation to steal up and have one more glance at the old home before returning to Gwennas, but her strength was exhausted now; and when, after being carried into the house and laid upon the sofa, Mrs. Mullion threw herself sobbing upon her knees beside her child, Geoffrey placed his hand upon the old man's shoulder, and pointed to the pair.

“Is she to stay, Uncle Paul?” he said softly.

“God forgive her as I do, my boy,” the old man replied, in a broken voice. “I need ask for pardon as well as she.”

Geoffrey hesitated about leaving, but, on

looking into the room again, he saw mother and child clasped in each other's arms, and he stole softly away to where Uncle Paul stood in the doorway.

"Come," said Geoffrey. "I must have another cheroot, Uncle Paul, and then for home."

"Home?" said the old man, gently; "will you not come here once more?"

"Yes—no—yes—no; I cannot say to-night, but whether I do or no, old fellow, the good old days shall come again for us. Why, Uncle Paul," he cried, puffing away at his fresh cheroot which he had lit from that in the old man's lips, and laying his hands upon his shoulders, "if it were not too late we'd go into the summer-house and have another row. Hallo! who's this?"

For hasty steps were heard coming up towards the gate, and a hoarse voice cried,—

"Trethick—Master Trethick! Pengelly said Master Trethick had come up here."

“Prawle,” cried Geoffrey. “You here !
Why, what’s wrong ? ”

“Murder’s what’s wrong,” cried the old man, hoarsely. “Quick, man, quick ! You come along o’ me.”

CHAPTER XV.

A STRUGGLE FOR LIFE—AND DEATH.

BESSIE was rather longer than usual with her mother that night, but at last the invalid was comfortably settled, and when she went back into the sitting-room the child was just beginning to be restless.

“Will you come and stay with him a minute, Madge?” she said. “I’ll be back directly;” but there was no answer.

“Madge! Madge!”

Bessie felt frightened. She could not tell why, but, with a feeling that something was wrong, she ran to Madge’s room, but only to find it empty, and her hat and cloak gone.

“And Mr. Trethick told me not to let her go again!”

Bessie felt more troubled than she could express, and recalling Madge's strange and excited ways, she felt now sure that there was something wrong.

“I might overtake her if she has gone along the cliff,” she said to herself; and, without hesitation, she threw on her cloak and hat, and had gone to the door ready to run up to the cliff, when the little one began to remonstrate loudly about being left alone.

For the moment Bessie thought of calling up her father from his den down below, but as quickly she thought that if any desperate idea was in poor Madge's brain, the sight or touch of her child might act upon her more strongly than words; so, catching up the little one, she curled it up tightly in the cloak she wore, and started off, meeting John Tregenna, and in her surprise, and the suddenness of the attack, being hurled back helpless to-

wards the brink of the old shaft, down which the next instant she was falling.

Even in the horror of those awful seconds, she clutched her burthen tightly, and, with her thoughts coming fast, and seeming to lengthen out the time, she felt herself falling—falling, as she had often dreamed of going down in some terrible nightmare.

Twice over she brushed against the side, and she knew that she had turned completely over in her descent. Then there was the shock of her plunge into the deep black water, and all seemed to be over.

She had some recollection of having shrieked, but it was faint. What she did realize the most distinctly was her plunge into the cold water, and then going down half stunned for some considerable time before she began to struggle wildly, and rose to the surface.

All was black around her, but she could for the moment breathe, and beat about with

her hands, which touched the wall of rugged granite; and trying to cling to and thrust her fingers into its irregularities, she kept herself up for a few moments, during which the frantic feeling of fear which had mastered her seemed to die away; but the next minute her fingers had slipped from their frail hold, and she had again gone under.

She rose again directly, for Bessie was a stout swimmer, and had been from a child; and as she struck out, panting and gasping, she swam now to the other side, and then, striking out with one hand, she kept beating the other against the wall of rock that formed the sides of the square shaft, and sent up a despairing cry for help.

Poor girl, she might have cried the night through and been unheard. She knew it, too, as she felt herself growing fainter, her clothes crippling her limbs as they clung to them, and in another few moments she knew that she would be exhausted.

“It is murder,” she moaned. “Help, help !”

She had already swum along three sides of the shaft, when, as she reached the fourth, her hand and arm passed in, and she uttered a cry of joy, striking out vigorously, and finding herself swimming in an opening for a few strokes, when she struck again against the rock, and the chill of the horror of impending death once more came upon her. After a few more vain struggles, she clung to the slimy rocks, feeling herself sink, and that life, now dearer than she could have believed, was ebbing away. But as she felt this her limbs rested upon the bottom of the opening into which she had swum, and she knew now that she was in the adit or passage that carried off the water from the old pit when it reached a certain height.

It was some minutes before she could subdue the trembling that shook her limbs, and summon courage enough to move, lest

in that hideous darkness she should go the wrong way, and sink back into the deep water; but, as she grew more collected, she felt that if she crawled onward she would be right; and so it proved, for, dragging herself on to the rock, she was the next minute on the rough floor of the adit, kneeling in an inch or two of water; and here, sinking lower, she covered her face with her hands, thrust back her streaming hair, and burst into a passion of hysterical sobbing, as she prayed that she might be saved from this horrible death.

She was mad almost with terror for the time, but by degrees she grew calmer, and, putting out her hands, she touched the walls on either side, and just above her head.

"I know where I am," she said aloud, "only I'm frightened and confused, and—Oh, God of heaven, Madge's child!"

Her hands went down to her breast as if expecting to find it clinging there, and then,

chilled once more with horror, she remained there in the horrible darkness, afraid to move, as she tried to realize whether the little thing had fallen with her.

She put her hands to her throat again.

The cloak was gone—it had broken away at the fastening 'in her frantic struggles for life.

She hesitated, but as she did so, she seemed to see the pale, white figure of Madge rising up before her, and saying to her, "Give me my child;" and, rousing herself to her terrible task, she slowly crept back into the water—in the shallow part within the adit—and waded step by step back three or four yards till, feeling cautiously with one foot before her, she found that she had reached the brink; another step and she would be once more over the deep water, where it went down hundreds of feet into the bowels of the earth.

She dared not swim out, but, holding by

the rugged wall of the adit, she thrust out her hand along the surface, feeling as far as she could reach again and again, here and there, but there was nothing; and she crossed to the other side, held on, and tried again, feeling giddy as she did so, and as if she dared do no more lest she should step back into that horrible pit.

Then her heart gave a wild throb, for her right hand touched something—her cloak, and she drew it softly towards her, backing more and more into the adit, as she gathered the cloth into her hands, and uttered a cry of joy.

The babe was there, twisted in the folds of the great cloak which had floated with it, holding within its saturated cloth plenty of air to keep the little thing upon the surface.

With the water streaming from her, Bessie crept on to the rocky floor of the adit, and, panting and sobbing hysterically, she has-

tened to unwind the clinging covering from the helpless babe; but, in the darkness and confusion, it was some minutes before she got it free and held it to her dripping breast, kissing it, holding it to her lips to feel whether it breathed, forgetting her own terrible position as her thoughts all went to her little charge, and calling it by the most endearing names.

There was no response, no fretful cry, no shriek of pain or suffering; the little thing lay inert in her arms, and in her agony, as a fresh horror burst upon her, Bessie spoke to it angrily, and shook it.

“Cry!” she exclaimed. “Oh, if it would only cry! Baby, baby! Oh, heaven help me! it is dead—it is dead!”

She held it tightly to her breast for a moment or two as she knelt there, rocking herself to and fro. Then a thought struck her, and, changing her attitude to a sitting position, she held the little thing in her lap,

wrung out the cloak as well as she could, and wrapped the child in it once more to try and give some warmth to its little fast-chilling limbs. As she did so, Bessie felt how dearly she had grown to love the little helpless thing whose mother's illness had made it so dependent upon her.

"Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do?" she sobbed at last. "Will no one help me? Mr. Trethick! Father! Help!"

"I might as well cry to the sea," she moaned at last, as she held the baby more tightly to her breast. "Now let me try and think, or I shall go mad."

She remained perfectly motionless, with her teeth set fast, for a few minutes, beating down the horror that threatened for the time to wreck her reason.

"I can think now," she said. "He threw me down the old shaft, and I got into the adit, where I'm kneeling. If I try, how can I get out?"

She thought again, but she was so confused by her fall that it was some time before she could realize the fact that she might creep through this old passage hewn in the rock, and, if not stopped by a fall from the roof, come out upon the shore.

“But the winzes!” she said, with a shudder. “The winzes!”

It was well for her that, as a miner’s daughter, she called to mind the fact that, in all probability, the passage in which she knelt would have another parallel to it, some twenty or thirty feet below, and connected with it by one or two perpendicular well-like openings in the floor, openings which, like the passage below, would, of course, be filled with water.

Knowing that there were such dangers in her path, she at last started, creeping along on her knees, and, with one hand, feeling the way.

It was no such great distancé, but, under

the circumstances, it was painful in the extreme. Still her spirits rose as she went on, for at the end of five minutes there came to her the peculiar sound of the waves dashing upon the shore; and creeping onward, with her burthen clasped to her breast, and her head at times striking against the roof, she began to be hopeful that her worst troubles were to be the mud, and slime, and water through which she crept; when, all at once, the cautiously extended hand which guided her way, feeling ceiling, wall, and floor, went down into deep water, and she knew that she was on the brink of a pit, full to the brim, and this had to be crossed.

Bessie's knowledge came to her aid, and, laying the baby tenderly down, she brought both hands to bear, feeling cautiously about to determine the width of the winze.

If it were across the adit it would be narrow, and she hoped to be able to step over; if it were cut in the other direction

there might be a rocky shelf at the side giving sufficient room for her to pass.

It was cut across the adit, for she could feel the square edge of the rock from wall to wall; and rising and feeling about over it for a prominence in the wall by which she could hold on, she grasped it tightly, placed her right foot close to the edge, and leaned forward, trying with her left to reach the other side.

Yes, she was successful. They are economical of labour in digging through solid rock, and she found that the winze was but a yard across, so, drawing herself back, she caught up her burthen, hesitating for a moment, as she felt that a false step would plunge them both into the well-like opening. Then, bending low, she made as bold a stride as she could, crossed in safety, and once more resumed her cautious progress, till the sea-breeze fanned her cheek as she crept out amongst the rocks, and, falling upon her

knees, she once more sobbed and prayed aloud.

Rousing herself, though, to a sense of her responsibility, she rose and hurried along the rugged shore beneath the cliff to the sloping path down which Madge had come some time before; and, climbing to the cliff path, she gave one frightened, unnerved look in the direction of the opening leading to the old shaft, and then ran painfully towards the cottage.

But Bessie's strength was gone. Her run soon became a walk, her walk a tottering crawl, and it was with blanched face she at last staggered into the cottage, where her father was now seated, keeping up a blazing fire with wreck-wood to save the candle.

"Why, Bess, my lass!" he said.

"Oh, father, help!" she cried, in a hoarse, piteous voice, as she threw herself upon her knees by the fire to try and restore life to the little clay-cold form she held.

“Wet—drenched!” he cried. “In the sea?”

“No, father,” she moaned. “Quick—the doctor. Mr. Trethick. He threw me down the old pit shaft.”

“Trethick did?” roared the old man.

“No, John Tregenna; and he has killed his child.”

“As I will him,” roared the old wrecker, raising his fists to heaven. “So help me God!”

CHAPTER XVI.

A STRONG MAN'S WEAKNESS.

"HERE, speak out," cried Geoffrey excitedly, as he hurried with old Prawle down towards the cliff. "What is it? What do you mean?" and as the old man hurriedly recited all he knew, Geoffrey felt his breath come thick and fast.

As they reached the cliff they came upon Dr. Rumsey, who had been summoned by old Prawle before he had gone up to Mrs. Mullion's to find Geoffrey; and, after a distant salutation, the doctor began to question Geoffrey, but without avail. Then they went on in silence to find Bessie, with her wet dishevelled hair and clinging garments,

still kneeling before the fire with Madge's baby in her arms.

She looked up in a pitiful way towards Mr. Rumsey as he entered, and rose stiffly and laid her little burthen upon the couch.

"A candle, quick!" cried the doctor; and Geoffrey lit one and placed it in the eager hands, to look on afterwards, in company with old Prawle, who stood there, with his hands deep in his pockets, scowling heavily at the scene.

Dr. Rumsey's examination was short and decisive.

"I can do nothing," he said quietly. "Poor little thing, it has been dead some time."

Bessie burst into a low sobbing wail, and crouched there upon the floor; but she raised her face again with a wild stare as she heard Geoffrey speak.

"But try, doctor; for heaven's sake try," he cried.

"I know my business, Mr. Trethick," said the doctor coldly. "The child was not drowned. Place your hand here. Its head must have struck the rock. It was dead before it reached the water."

Geoffrey Trethick—strong, stern, trouble-hardened man—bent down as he heard these words, and placed his firm, white hand upon the dead child's head, realizing fully the doctor's words. Then, raising the little corpse tenderly in his arms, he stood looking down in the white, placid face, the doctor and old Prawle watching him with curious eyes.

"My poor little man," he said, in a hoarse whisper. "My poor little man! Oh, baby, baby, I couldn't have loved you better if you had been my own!"

As he spoke he raised the little thing higher and higher, and kissed its little lips and then its cold, white forehead, and the two men heard a sob start from his breast, and saw the great tears rolling softly down.

"Oh, Rumsey!" he groaned, "I'm afraid I'm a poor weak fool."

He laid the little thing reverently upon the couch, and the doctor looked at him curiously, till he was recalled to himself by old Prawle's hand laid upon his shoulder.

"See to her, doctor, she wants you badly;" and it was true, for Bessie had sunk back with her head against the couch.

"Where is Miss Mullion?" said the doctor. "I want some help."

"At home, doctor, as bad as your patient there. You must be nurse and doctor too."

Without a word old Prawle took a couple of strides across the room, and, lifting Bessie as if she had been a babe, he carried her into Madge's chamber and laid her upon the bed. The motion revived her, though, and, after a few words of advice, the doctor went off homeward, and Geoffrey and old Prawle walked up and down the cliff, the

father going in at intervals to see that Bess was sleeping comfortably, and listening at her door.

“Not to-night,” the old man muttered; “not to-night. I can’t go and leave my poor lass there, perhaps to die. It’ll keep a bit—it’ll keep a bit;” and he rejoined Geoffrey.

The next morning at daybreak they took a lantern and explored the adit, the old man pointing out the traces of Bessie’s trailing garments, and here and there a spot or two of blood upon the rock.

They crossed the winze, and Geoffrey wondered how a woman could have attempted it in the dark; and at last they stood in a stooping position at the end, looking at the black surface of the water in the old shaft, upon which was floating Bessie’s hat and the child’s hood.

They could not reach them, so they returned, old Prawle saying, in a curiously harsh voice,—

"She didn't tell a lie, Master Trethick, eh?"

"A lie?" exclaimed Geoffrey. "It is too horrible almost to believe."

"Horrible? Yes. Now let's go and look at the pit mouth."

Geoffrey followed him, feeling as if it were all part of some terrible dream, and wondering what effect it would have upon Madge.

"Why, Prawle," he exclaimed, stopping short, "that villain must have thought he was throwing in mother and child."

"Ay, I dessay," said the old man. "No doubt, but it makes no difference to me. He threw down my Bess, and that's enough for me. Come on."

There was little to see on the turf by the old shaft after they had climbed the cliff; but, as Geoffrey went close to the mouth and looked down into the black void, he turned away with a shudder, wondering how any one could have been hurled down there in the

darkness of the night, and yet have lived to see another day.

"Come away, Prawle," he said hoarsely. "What have you got there?"

"Button off a man's coat," he said shortly. "Less than that's been enough to send any one to the gallows. But I don't want to send him."

"No," said Geoffrey; "the horror of what he has done—the murder of his own child—will stay with him to his grave."

"If he ever has one," muttered Prawle.

Geoffrey looked at him searchingly, but the old man's face was as inscrutable as that of a sphinx; and, leading the way back, he went down into his favourite place by the boat below the face of the cliff, and as soon as Geoffrey had made a hasty breakfast, which he found Bessie had prepared, he went off to the cottage to see Mrs. Mullion, and tell her of the events of the past night.

CHAPTER XVII.

JONAH.

THE threatening storm was giving abundant promise that it would soon visit Carnac ; and warned by its harbingers, the various red-sailed luggers were making fast for the little port. Several had made the shelter behind the arm of masonry which curved out from the shore, and one of the last to run in was the boat owned by Tom Jennen and three more.

They had just lowered the last sail, and, empty and disappointed, they were about to make a line fast to one of the posts, when John Tregenna ran quickly down to where Tom Jennen stood upon the stone pier, rope in hand.

"Stop," he cried.

"What's matter?" growled Jennen.

"I want you to take me across to—"

He whispered the rest.

"Storm coming. There'll be a gashly sea on directly, master. Pay out more o' that line, will you?" he bellowed. "Don't you see she's foul o' the anchor?"

"Ten pounds if you'll put off directly, and take me," said Tregenna, glancing uneasily back.

"Wouldn't go for twenty," growled Jennen.

"Thirty, then, if you'll put off at once."

"Hear this, mates?" growled Jennen.

"No—er."

"Here's Master Tregenna says he'll give us thirty poun' if we'll take him across to—"

"Hush!" cried Tregenna. "Yes, I'll give you thirty pounds, my men."

"There'll be quite a big storm directly,"

said another of the men. "Thirty poun's a lot o' money, but life's more."

"Fifty, then. Here, fifty!" cried Tregenna, desperately. Fifty pounds, if you start at once."

He took the crisp, rustling bank-notes from his pocket-book, and held them out, and it was too much for the men. They glanced at one another, and then their decision was made.

"Here, hand it over, and jump in," cried Tom Jennen; and, thrusting the notes into his pocket, he pointed to the boat, and no sooner had Tregenna leaped in than, shortening his hold of the line, he began to pull, while his mates handled their hitchers to set the lugger free.

Another minute, and Tom Jennen had leaped aboard, and they were hauling up one of the sails, which began to flap and fill. Then one of them ran to the tiller, the lugger gathered way, and rode round to the end of

the pier, rising to the summit of a good-sized wave, and gliding down the other side, as a little mob of people came running down the pier, shouting to them to stop.

“Take no notice. Go on,” cried Tregenna, excitedly.

“Why, what’s the matter?” said Tom Jennen, who, like his companions, was in profound ignorance of the events that had taken place while they were away.

“Keep on, and get out to sea,” cried Tregenna, fiercely. “I have paid you to take me, and you have the money.”

“Stop that boat,” roared old Prawle, who was now shouting and raving at the end of the pier. “Come back—come back.”

“Don’t listen to the old madman,” cried Tregenna. “Haul up the other sail.”

“We know how to manage our boat,” said Jennen, sulkily; but he seized the rope, one of the others followed his example, and the second sail rose, caught the wind, and

the lugger lay over and began to surge through the waves.

“Stop that boat! Murder!” shouted old Prawle, gesticulating furiously, while those who were with him waved their hands and shouted as well.

“Why, there’s old Master Vorlea, the constable,” said one of the men; “and he seems to have gone off his head, too. What’s the matter ashore, Master Tregenna?”

“Matter? I don’t know,” cried Tregenna, hoarsely. “Keep on, and get me to Plymouth as quickly as you can.”

“We’ll try,” said Tom Jennen; “but with this gashly storm a-coming on we’ll never get out of the bay to-day.”

“But you must,” cried Tregenna, excitedly. “A man does not pay fifty pounds unless his business is urgent.”

“Or he wants to get away,” said Tom Jennen, surlily, as he looked back at the pier,

now getting indistinct in the haze formed by the spray.

For the sea was rising fast, and as the fishers, who had made fast their boats within the harbour, joined the crowd staring after the lugger that had just put off, they shook their heads and wondered what could have tempted Tom Jennen and his mates to go.

They were not long in learning that old Prawle had been after John Tregenna, charging him with the murder of the child, and the attempt to kill her he supposed to be its mother; but Tregenna seemed to have been seized by a horror of encountering Prawle, and he had fled as if for his life, while, with all the pertinacity of a bloodhound, the old man had tried to hunt him down, following him from place to place, where he sought for refuge, till, with the dread increasing in force, the guilty man had fled to the harbour, and, as the coach would not leave again till the next day, he had bribed

the crew of the lugger to take him within reach of the railway.

As Prawle saw the boat get beyond his reach, he looked round for one to go in pursuit; and he turned to hurry back home, with the intent of putting off in his own, but as he did so his eyes swept the horizon, his life of experience told him what would follow, and he sat down upon one of the mooring posts with a low, hoarse laugh.

“Does Tom Jennen think he’s going to get out of the bay to-day?” he said.

“He’ll have hard work,” shouted the man nearest to him.

“Hard work? He’ll be running for home ere two hours are gone, if his boat don’t sink, for they’ve got Jonah on board yonder, and the sea’s a-rising fast.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LUGGER ASHORE.

By this time half the town was out to watch the lugger in which John Tregenna was trying to make his escape, and, the story of his wrong-doing having passed from lip to lip, the crowd upon the harbour wall and the cliff began rapidly to increase.

Geoffrey heard of what had taken place, and hurried down to the cliff, and old Prawle was pointed out to him seated upon the pier, where the sea was already beginning to beat furiously as the wind rapidly gathered force.

“Why, Prawle,” he cried, when he had hurried down to his side, “what have you been doing?”

“Doing, lad? Trying to do to him as he did to me and mine. He’s got away,” cried the old man, hoarsely; “but I’ll have him yet.”

“Yes, but you must leave him to the law,” cried Geoffrey. “Come: walk home with me. You must not take this into your own hands.”

“Come home!” said the old man, with a fierce look in his eye. “Yes, when I have seen him drown, for it will come to that before many hours are past.”

Finding him immovable, Geoffrey stayed by the old man’s side till they were driven back to the head of the harbour by the waves that now dashed right over the wall where they had been standing but a few minutes before; and from thence Prawle, after some three hours’ watching, climbed to the cliff, where he leaned over the iron rail and gazed out to sea through his hands, held telescope fashion.

"She's labouring hard," he said, with a grim chuckle, "and they've taken in all sail they can. Look yonder, Trethick: see. There, I told you so. Tom Jennen's give it up, and he'll run for the harbour now."

Geoffrey strained his eyes to try and make out what the old man had described; but he could only dimly see the two-masted vessel far out in the hazy spray, and that she was tossing up and down, for the sea was rising still, and the wind rapidly increasing to almost hurricane force.

Old Prawle was right, as the excitement upon the cliff showed, for, after hours of brave effort, the crew of the lugger had proved the hopelessness of their task, and were now running for home.

What had been a long and weary fight in the teeth of the wind resolved itself into quite a short run, with scarcely any sail hoisted, and the great white-topped waves seeming to chase the buoyant

lugger as she raced for shelter from the storm.

The fishermen stood watching her through the haze, and shook their heads as they glanced down at the harbour, where the rocks were now bare, now covered by the huge waves that thundered amidst them, tossing the great boulders over and over as if they had been pebbles, and leaving them to rumble back with a noise like thunder, but only to be cast up again. All the eastern side of the bay was now a sheet of white foam, which the wind caught up and sent flying inland like yeast ; and so fierce was the wind now in its more furious gusts, that posts, corners, rocks, and the lee of boats were sought by the watchers as shelter from the cutting bl  st.

Old Prawle seemed to mind the furious gale no more than the softest breeze, and at length he descended the cliff slope towards where the waves came tumbling in a hundred yards or so beyond the end of the huge wall

of masonry that formed the harbour ; and as he saw the sturdy fishermen taking the same direction, with coils of rope over their shoulders, Geoffrey needed no telling that the lugger would come ashore there, for, if expected to make the harbour, the men would have made no such preparations as these.

As they went down along the rugged slope Geoffrey touched the old man on the shoulder, and pointed to the harbour.

“No,” shouted old Prawle, in his ear ; “she can’t do it, nor yet with three times her crew.”

The crowd had rapidly increased, for it was known now that Tom Jennen’s “boot” must be wrecked, and quite a hundred men had gathered on the shore ready to lend a hand to save. No vessel could have lived in the chaos of foam between them and the lugger unless it were the lifeboat, and that was seven miles away, while the lugger was now not as many hundred yards.

Through the dim haze Geoffrey could make out the figures of the men on board when the lugger rose to the top of some wave, but for the most part they were hidden from his sight; and as he stood there, drenched with the spray, he shuddered as he thought of the fate of these, now so full of vigour, if their seamanship should really prove unavailing to guide them into a place of safety.

“Is there danger, Trethick?” said a voice at his ear; and, turning, there stood the Reverend Edward Lee, his white face bedewed with the spray, and his glasses in his hand, as he wiped off the thick film of salt water.

“I fear so. Poor fellows!” was the reply.

“Is it true that that unhappy man is on board?”

Geoffrey nodded, and their eyes met for a few moments.

“God forgive him!” said the vicar, softly.

"Trethick, can we do anything to save his life?"

As he spoke, Geoffrey for answer pointed to one of the huge green rollers that now came sweeping in, curled over, and broke with a roar like thunder upon the rocky beach.

"Nothing but stand ready with a rope," was the reply; and then the two young men stood watching the lugger till one of the fishermen came up with a great oilskin coat.

"Put it on, sir," he roared to the vicar. "It'll keep some of it off."

The vicar was about to refuse, but his good feeling prompted him to accept the offer, and a few minutes later another came up and offered one to Geoffrey, who shook his head, and, in place of taking it, stripped off his coat and moved farther down to meet the waves.

The vicar followed him quickly, for the crucial time had come. As far as those

ashore could make out, the crew of the lugger had hoisted their fore-sail a few feet higher, and, as they raced in, there was just a chance that she might obey her rudder and swing round into shelter ; but it was the faintest of chances, and so it proved.

On she came, light as a duck ; and, as she neared the shore, she seemed almost to leap from wave to wave, till at last, when she came in, riding as it were upon one huge green wall of water, nearer and nearer, with the speed almost of a race-horse.

“ Now—now—now, Tom ! ” rose in chorus, heard for a moment above the wind ; and, as if in obedience to the call, the head of the lugger was seen to curve round, and in another minute she would have been in shelter, when, as if fearful of missing their prey, the waves leaped at her, deluging her with water ; she was swept on and on towards where the crowd had gathered ; and then there was a shriek as the lugger was seen to

be lifted and dashed down upon the rocks—once, twice—and there was something dark, like broken timbers, churning about among the yeasty foam. The boat was in a hundred pieces tossing here and there.

For a few moments the fishermen ashore stood motionless, and then a man was seen to run out, rope in hand, into the white foam towards something dark, catch at it, and those ashore gave a steady haul, and one of the crew was brought in, amidst a roar of cheers, to where Geoffrey and the vicar stood.

Again there was a dark speck seen amongst the floating planks, and another man dashed in with a rope, and a second member of the little crew was dragged ashore.

Again another, who was stoutly swimming for his life, was fetched in; and almost at the same moment Geoffrey saw something that made his blood course fiercely through his veins.

"I can't help it," he muttered; "villain as he is, I cannot stand and see him drown."

There was no momentary hesitation; but, drawing a long breath, he dashed into the foam that seethed and rushed up the shore, for his quick eye had detected a hand thrust out from the surf for a moment, and his brave effort was successful, for he caught the sleeve of one of the drowning men. Then they were swept in for a time but sucked back; and but for the aid lent by one of the fishermen with a rope, it would have gone hard with them, though, in the excitement, Geoffrey hardly realized the fact till he found himself standing in the midst of a knot of fishermen, and the vicar clinging to his hand, but only for the clergyman to be roughly thrust aside by Tom Jennen, for it was he whom Geoffrey had saved; and the rough fellow got hold of his hand and squeezed it as in a vice.

"Where's Mr. Tregenna?" cried Geoffrey,

hoarsely, as soon as he could get breath, for he had caught sight of the rough, dark figure of old Prawle running to and fro in the shallow white water where the waves broke up.

"Hasn't he come ashore?" said Tom Jennen, with his face close to Geoffrey's.

The latter shook his head and looked inquiringly at the rough fisherman; but Tom Jennen staggered away to sit down, utterly exhausted by his struggle.

Planks, a mast with the dark cinnamon sail twisted round it, the lugger's rudder, a cask or two, a heap of tangled net, a sweep broken in half, and some rope—bit by bit the fragments of the brave little fisher-vessel came ashore, or were dragged out by one or other of the men; but though a dozen stood ready, rope in hand, to dash in amongst the foam and try to rescue a struggling swimmer, John Tregenna's hand was never seen stretched out for help, nor his ghastly face looking

wildly towards the shore. And at last, as the fragments of the lugger were gathered together in a heap, the crowd melted away, to follow where the half-drowned fishermen had been half-carried to their homes, and Geoffrey gladly accepted the hospitality offered to him by Edward Lee.

Tom Jennen had fared the worst, for he had been dashed once against a part of the lugger, and his ribs were crushed; but he seemed patient and ready to answer the questions of a visitor who came to him after he had seen the doctor leave.

“Were he aboard, Tom Jennen, when you tried to make the harbour?”

“Aboard? Who? Tregenna?”

“Ay.”

“Of course.”

“And he was with you when you struck?”

“Holding on by the side, and screeching for help like a frightened woman,” said Jennen.

"And where do you think he'd be now?" said the other.

"Drowned and dead, for he hadn't the spirit to fight for his life," said Jennen, "and I wish I'd never seen his face."

"I'd like to have seen it once more," said Tom Jennen's visitor, grimly. "Just once more;" and he nodded and left the cottage.

"I don't feel as if I ought to face my Bess till I've seen him once again," he muttered, as he went on along the cliff path; "but I don't know—I don't know. He was too slippery for me at the last;" and old Prawle went slowly and thoughtfully homeward to the Cove.

CHAPTER XIX.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

"SHE's better, Trethick, much better," said Uncle Paul. "Poor child! I thought it was going to be a case of madness. But sit down, man, I've just got a fresh batch of the old cheroots."

Geoffrey seated himself in the summer-house opposite to the old gentleman, with the soft sea-breeze blowing in at the open window; and for a time they smoked in silence.

"Mrs. Mullion is going away, Trethick," said the old man at last.

"Going away?"

"Yes; it will be better for Madge. Let

them go somewhere to a distance. The poor girl wants change, and she'll never be happy here."

"No," said Geoffrey, "I suppose not. Then you go with them?"

"I? No, my lad, I seem to be so used to this house that I don't want to make a change. I can't live much longer, Trethick, and I thought, perhaps, you would come back to the old place. There'll be plenty of room for both of us, and we can smoke and quarrel in the old style."

Geoffrey shook his head.

"I should like it," he said; "but it won't do, Uncle Paul. My career's over here in Carnac, and I ought to have been off long enough ago, instead of idling away my time, and growing rusty."

"Only you feel that you can't leave the place, eh?"

Geoffrey frowned, and half turned away his head.

"Well," said the old man, "Rhoda Penwynn is a fine girl, and full of purpose and spirit. There, sit down, man, sit down," he cried, putting his cane across the door to prevent Geoffrey's exit. "Can't you bear to hear a few words of truth?"

Geoffrey looked at him angrily, but he resumed his place.

"I shouldn't have thought much of her if she hadn't thrown you over as she did, my lad."

"Where was her faith?" cried Geoffrey.

"Ah, that's sentiment, my lad, and not plain common sense. Everything looked black against you."

"Black? Yes; and whose lips ought to have whitened my character?"

"Ah! it was an unlucky affair, Geoffrey, my boy, and we all owe you an apology. But look here: go and see her, and make it up."

"I? Go to see Miss Penwynn, and beg her to take me on again—to be her lover,

vice that scoun— Tchah! how hot-brained I am. *De mortuis!* Let him rest. But no, Uncle Paul. That's all over now."

"Don't see it, my boy. She never cared a snap of the fingers for Tregenna."

"But she accepted, and would have married him."

"After she believed you to be a scoundrel, Trethick."

"What right had she to consider me a scoundrel?" cried Geoffrey, hotly. "My character ought to have been her faith."

"Yes," said the old man, drily; "but then she had the misfortune to be a woman of sense and not of sentiment. I think she did quite right."

"Then I don't," said Geoffrey, hotly.

"Ah, that's better," said the old man; "it's quite a treat to have a bit of a row, Trethick. It's like going back to old times. I like Rhoda Penwynn better every day; and the way in which she helps the old man is

something to be admired, sir. But how he—a clever, sharp fellow—allowed that Tregenna to involve him as he did I don't know."

"I suppose he is very poor now," said Geoffrey, who could not conceal his interest.

"Poor? I don't believe he has a penny. The girl's as good or as bad as destitute."

Geoffrey did not speak, but sat with his eyes fixed upon a white-sailed fishing-boat far out upon the blue waters of the bay.

"She would have sacrificed herself for the old man, and I daresay have married Tregenna to save him, if she had not found out all that about poor Madge. I say, Trethick, if you really care for the girl, I think I should see her and make it up."

"But I don't care for her," cried Geoffrey, hotly. "I detest—I hate her."

"Humph!" said Uncle Paul, taking a fresh cheroot, and passing over the case to Geoffrey; "and this is the fellow who boasted that he had never told a lie!"

Just then there was a step on the gravel path, and Geoffrey shrank back in his place, the old man looking at him mockingly.

“There she is,” he said.

“You knew she was coming,” cried Geoffrey, in a low voice.

“Not I, boy. I knew that, like the good angel she is, she comes to see poor Madge; and if you won’t have her, I think I shall propose for her myself.”

As he spoke the old man got up and went to meet the visitor, taking her hand, drawing it through his arm, and leading her into the summer-house, where she stood, pale as ashes, on seeing it occupied by Geoffrey Trethick.

“This is no doing of mine, Miss Penwynn,” said Geoffrey, sternly, making a movement towards the door.

“Stop a minute, Trethick,” said the old man. “I must go in first and find whether Madge can see Miss Penwynn.

They heard his step upon the gravel, and the stones flying as he stamped down his cane, and then they stood in silence looking in each other's eyes.

Geoffrey was the first to speak, and it was in a bitter, angry voice that he exclaimed,—

“I never thought to have stood face to face with you again; but as we have met, Rhoda Penwynn, ask my pardon.”

Rhoda's eyes flashed angrily, but the look was subdued on the instant by one that was full of emotion, and, with half-closed eyes, she joined her hands together, and was about to sink upon her knees, but Geoffrey caught her arms and stopped her.

“No,” he said sharply; “I do not ask you to degrade yourself. Ask my pardon.”

“Forgive me, Geoffrey; my love for you had made me mad.”

Anger, bitterness, determination, promises never to speak, all were gone like a flash of light as Geoffrey Trethick heard those words;

and Rhoda Penwynn was clasped tightly to his breast.

The next moment—minute—hour—it might have been either for aught the occupants of the little look-out knew—they became aware of the presence of Mr. Paul, who stood in the open doorway, leaning upon his cane.

“Well, Trethick,” he said mockingly, “when are you going away?”

“Heaven knows,” cried Geoffrey. “When I have turned Cornwall upside down, I think.”

“Hah!” ejaculated the old man quietly, as he looked from one to the other. “It’s a wonderful thing this love. It’s all right, then, now?”

As he spoke he took Rhoda’s hand, and patted it. “I’m very glad, my dear,” he said tenderly, “very glad, for he’s a good, true fellow, though he has got a devil of a temper of his own. Now go in and see poor Madge, and I wish you could put some of the

happiness I can read in those eyes into her poor dark breast."

He kissed her hand as he led her to the house with all the courtly delicacy of a gentleman of the old school; while, unable to believe in the change, Geoffrey walked up and down the little summer-house like a wild beast in a cage.

He was interrupted by the return of Uncle Paul, who took his seat and looked at the young man in a half-smiling, half-contemptuous fashion.

"Laugh away," cried Geoffrey. "I don't mind it a bit."

"I'm not laughing at you, boy. But there, light your cigar again, or take a fresh one. I want to talk to you."

Geoffrey obeyed. He would have done anything the old man told him then, and they sat smoking in silence, Geoffrey's ears being strained to catch the murmurs of a voice he knew, as it came from an open window,

for Rhoda was reading by the invalid's couch.

"There, never mind her now," said the old man. "Look here, do you know that she won't have a penny?"

"I sincerely hope not," said Geoffrey.

"And you've got none," said the old man. "How are you going to manage?"

"Set to work again now that I have something to work for," cried Geoffrey, jumping up and again beginning to pace the summer-house.

"Sit down, stupid, and do husband some of that vitality of yours. You'll drive me mad if you go on in that wild beast way."

Geoffrey laughed.

"Ah, that's better," said the old man. "I haven't seen that grin upon your face for months. But now look here, boy, what are you thinking of doing?"

"I don't know," said Geoffrey. "A hundred things. First of all I shall try once

more to hunt out the people who bought Wheal Carnac, and see if they will take me on."

"What, to lose their money?"

"No, sir, but to make money for them."

"Then you don't know who bought it?"

"No; I tried the agents in town, but they were close as could be."

"Of course," said the old man. "They were told to be. He did not want it known."

"How do you know?" said Geoffrey.

"Because I told them."

"Then you know who bought the mine?"

"Well, yes, of course. It was I."

Geoffrey's cigar dropped from his hand, and he sank back, staring.

"Do you know what you have done?" he cried.

"Yes, made a fool of myself, I suppose; but I thought I'd have it, and you shall realize all you can for me out of the place. I

got it very cheaply. Perhaps I shall build a house there—if I live.”

“Build! House!” cried Geoffrey. “Why, if old Prawle is right, the mine is rich in copper to a wonderful extent.”

“And the water?”

“Can easily be led away.”

“Then take it, my boy, and do with it the best you can,” said the old man. “I bought it for the merest song, and money has ceased to have any charms for me.”

“Mr. Paul!”

“Geoffrey, my dear boy, I’ve never forgotten those words of yours. You said you were sure that I had a soft spot in my heart, and—God bless you, my lad!”—cried the old man fervently, “you were about the only one, with your frank, bluff way, who could touch it. I’d have given you something, Geoffrey, if you could have married Madge; but there, that’s over, and I’m only an old fool after all.”

CHAPTER XX.

LAST CHRONICLES.

"I ALWAYS did believe in her," cried Amos Pengelly proudly, as he saw, some six months later, the rich copper ore being brought up in a mighty yield from out of Wheal Carnac.

For old Prawle was right. There were rich veins of copper in the mine, which were easily obtained after an adit had been opened through the zorn to relieve it of the water.

The old man felt sore about it at the time, but on seeing what a lucrative position his son-in-law elect had taken in the mine, he soon got over his soreness, and was one of the first to congratulate Geoffrey upon his

success, reaping, too, something for himself, while, by a private arrangement, Geoffrey was able to place Doctor Rumsey's shares in a very different position, making that worthy, as he whipped the little streams, exclaim,—

“And only to think of it! I might have almost given those shares away.”

Mrs. Mullion and her daughter left Carnac, but not to go far—the old man objected, for he did not care for long journeys to visit them, and he did not seem happy unless he had paid a visit once a month, showing as he did a very genuine attachment to his niece.

The last chronicle to be recorded of the little Cornish town is that upon a certain morning Miss Pavey came blushing and simpering to Rhoda, while her father was down at his office, where, to Mr. Chynoweth's great delight, there were business-matters to record once more upon the slate, and some-

thing of the old good times were beginning to return.

Miss Pavey kissed Rhoda affectionately, congratulated her upon the near approach of her marriage, and ended by simpering a good deal, and saying that she had a boon that she wanted her to grant.

“Do you mean a favour?” said Rhoda, smiling.

“Yes, dearest Rhoda; but you are so dreadfully matter-of-fact,” simpered Miss Pavey; and then she laughed, and covered her face with her hands.

“I think I can tell you what you want to ask,” said Rhoda, smiling.

“Oh, no, no, no! Don’t say it. It seems so shocking,” cried Miss Pavey from behind her hands.

“You want to be my bridesmaid,” said Rhoda, “and I’m sure you shall, if it will make you happy.”

“Oh, no,” said Miss Pavey blankly, as she

dropped her hands into her lap. "It wasn't that, dear."

"What was it, then?" said Rhoda wonderingly.

"I thought—I hoped—I fancied," faltered Miss Pavey, "that you would not mind my—oh dear! I can hardly tell you."

The hands went up over her face again.

"Why surely, Martha, you are not going to be married?" said Rhoda.

"Yes, dear. Isn't it shocking?" exclaimed Miss Pavey, more volubly now the murder was out. "I used to think that Mr. Lee would have proposed to me, for no one knows what I have done for that man; and you know, dear, how much interest I have taken in the parish for his sake."

"Yes, you have taken a great deal of interest in the parish, I know," replied Rhoda.

"But I have long come to the conclusion, dear, that he is a man who will never marry. Oh dear no! I can read it in his countenance.

Seriously though, to deal with the matter plainly, I do not think he would have done wrong; but, as I have said, dear, he is not a marrying man."

"But you have not told me the name of the gentleman to whom you are going to be married."

"Oh, my dear Rhoda, how droll you are. You are so wrapped up in your own affairs that you forget. Why, Mr. Chynoweth, of course. Poor man, he has been so pressing of late, that I don't like to refuse him any longer, dear. It would be unkind; and I must own that we are very fond of each other, and I thought I should like for us to be married with you."

"I'm sure I congratulate you, Martha," said Rhoda, smiling; "and if it will afford you any gratification, by all means be married at the same time; but I must warn you that our wedding will be a very quiet, tame affair."

“Oh yes, dear, and so will ours, for Mr. Chynoweth says that we cannot afford to spend money upon ourselves. Oh, Rhoda, I am sure you envy me!”

“No,” said Rhoda, smiling, as a strange sense of the happiness in her own possession thrilled her veins. “I only congratulate you.”

“So strange, is it not?” said Miss Pavey. “You remember, my dear, my remark when I told you about the coming of the two gentlemen by the coach. Ah, Rhoda, dearest, that has not all come to pass, but what giddy things we were in those happy days.”

Rhoda felt disposed to rescind her promise, but she did not, and Miss Pavey had her wish.

The last we have to record of Geoffrey Trethick is that, as a prosperous mine owner, his favourite practice is to get back to An Morlock and seat himself with his back

to the rocks, and his knees up, the said knees nipping between them a portion of the garments of a sturdy baby, who nods and laughs at him, and makes catches at his face in the most absurd way; and somehow all this nonsense does not seem in any way to cause annoyance to the tall, handsome woman at his side. They both, perhaps, recall a similar scene that took place long back near Gwennas Cove; but there is never any allusion to that past; for whenever Geoffrey evinces any desire to speak of past troubles, somehow or another he finds that his lips are sealed.

THE END.

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